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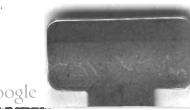
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# ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS ANNA BOWMAN DODD



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## ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

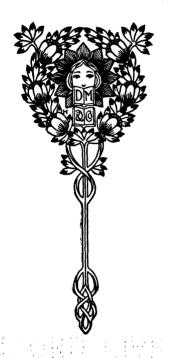
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# On the Knees of the Gods

By
Anna Bowman Dodd



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Published, January, 1908

#### To E. W. D.

Le Manoir de Vasouy

# **CONTENTS**

#### BOOK I

#### CORINTH AND ATHENS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I	Manes and Maia
II	Nirias and Maia 14
III	Maia's History
IV	On To Athens
$\mathbf{V}_{\cdot}$	An Invocation 40
VI	THE FEAST OF DIONYSUS 42
VII	Mаіа's Тпіимрн 55
VIII.	In the Painted Porch 64
IX	A Breakfast at the Piræus 76
	BOOK II
	OLYMPIA
X.	A FATEFUL DECISION 94
XI	THE SACRED WAY
XII	ION AND MAIA
XIII	THE POMPIC WAY
XIV	A Night in Arcadia 157
$\mathbf{X}\mathbf{V}$	Before the Race 168
XVI	THE CHARIOT RACE 174

### **CONTENTS**

## BOOK III

#### ATHENS

CHAPTER			•		PAGE
XVII	A MARRIAGE PROJECT .	•	•		. 195
XVIII	An Athenian Dawn	•	•		. 208
XIX	Over a Garden Wall .	•			. 215
$\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}$	MYRTO'S AWAKENING				. 226
XXL	HERMIONE AND MYRTO .				. 235
XXII	Nausicaä				. 250
XXIII	A FAMILY SCENE				. 261
XXIV	THE BREATH OF MARS .				. 268
XXV	A Betrothal				. 279
XXVI.	THE DANCER			•	. 291
XXVII	Maia's Arrival				. 308
XXVIII	Maia's Little Plot				. 320
XXIX	THE VOICE OF FATE				. 338
XXX	THE DEPARTURE OF THE F	LEET	•	•	
	BOOK IV				
	SYRACUSE				
XXXI	A Barber's Story	•		•	. 361
XXXII	Timoleon's Return	•		•	. 370
XXXIII	ATHENS HEARS THE TRUTH	Ι.		•	. 383
XXXIV	THE QUARRIES	•		•	. 391
XXXV	Ion Sings	•		•	. 403
XXXVI	AN EPITHALAMIUM		_	_	. 410

# ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

#### BOOK I - CORINTH AND ATHENS

#### Chapter I

#### MANES AND MAIA

WITHIN its forty miles of walls, Corinth lay like a giant, stretching its limbs between the lofty Citadel, Acro-Corinthus, and the sea. Its gardens and temples, its statues and colonnades, and its brown tiled roofs rolled on like a river whose flow was arrested by the uplifted mass of tower-studded defences. The roar of the living million or more rose up from the crowded city. Along the amber sands the Crissian sea curled its peacock blue waters. Red, white, and purple sails sent long trails of colour across the liquid surface, while about the docks of the war triremes, the reflections were black. For the trade of all the known world came to anchor at either one of Corinth's two ports.

Upward from the plain, mighty Acro-Corinthus sprang. Like a victor carrying flowery wreaths to perilous heights, the mountain's jagged rock surface showed, here and there, the bloom of verdure. At certain altitudes the rocks receded, forming natural terraces. On one such, Manes, the famous chorus-master, had built him a house.

Such narrow ledges of space were cheap. A chorus in training could here be put through their daily drill, and slaves and masters lodged, at half the price asked within luxurious and costly Corinthian streets.

In the warmth of a late autumn day, in the year 416,

before our Lord came, Manes' pupils and their trainers were hurrying to complete their rehearsals.

A dozen youths were marching with rhythmic step, to the sound of a war-trumpet. Their shields and helmets, like the bronze of their skins, glittered and gleamed, struck by the slanting sun-rays.

On the terrace below, some boys were practising with cymbals. An orchestra composed of harps, flutes, and zithers were rehearsing a dance measure. Above the crashing of discordant sounds the sharpened voices of the teachers and trainers could be heard administering reproof.

Close to the terrace wall, below the master's house, two elderly men stood.

In the short, hurried pauses of their talk, the city's roar rose up, while, closer to their ears rang the clinking sound of dice, shaken and then rolled on the rough pebbles of the terrace. The names of champion cocks, those highest in Corinth's favour, were ever and anon cried out, by the eager players. For Nirias' slaves were at their favorite pastime. This play of the dice made of each gambler a human instrument, tensely strung.

Neither Nirias, the richest of Corinthian merchants, nor Manes, the chorus-master, heard either the sharp, shrill cries of the dice throwers, nor did they heed the light mocking laughter of some frolicsome priestesses of Aphrodite, who, on their long, upward climb to their temple, had stopped, along the mountain road, to criticise and to imitate the boyish voices of Manes' pupils.

Both Nirias and Manes were consumed by an inward heat of maddened impatience. And both, being Greek, were striving to wear two faces within their hoods.

Manes' irritation had reached the point of physical loss of self-control. His fingers visibly shook, as he feverishly caressed the long scroll he held. He could scarce wreath his lips with the right smile — scarce frame the commonplaces expected of him. To be in actual possession of such a treasure — to be the first, in all Corinth — in the Isthmus — to finger the "Wasps"— and to have to stand and smirk and smile!

Manes gave an angry toss of his bush of hair backwards. He felt his breath through his coarse beard, come in quickened gasps; yet he must, as he well knew, check his ache of longing for quick reading of the play; he must continue to waste time in pretending Nirias' stupid comments were criticism.

"You have read it, doubtless, Nirias? and what is your opinion?" and Manes lifted his eyebrows, enquiringly, as though his own decision must wait on his patron's judgment.

"Ah — magnificent — the greatest of all his plays!" Nirias answered, in a lordly tone, with the accent of one who considered his verdict final.

Manes bethought himself quickly, as a solace for his torture, of one decision concerning which he hoped the merchant would show equal assurance.

"And — and it is I who am to have the chorus?" he asked, with eager questioning.

"Oh," replied Nirias, with the ease of the rich whose passion for the arts has come late — along with an over-full purse —"I took it to the Archon, to ask him for a chorus. But the city is having a fit of economy, it appears. I have, therefore, determined to set up the chorus myself. Can you be ready, do you think?"

Manes' smile was now one of beatitude. "Ready, sir, why, I'll kill a dozen choruses with work, sooner than miss its production. You'll permit me to look the play over?" And Manes managed to lift the arch of his strong brows with due humility.

"Certainly - certainly - I will walk about a little. The

air is good on your terrace" cried Nirias, with becoming condescension. He flattered himself his own impatience was being admirably cloaked.

Nirias pretended to be wholly taken up with adjusting the folds of his himation, as his heavy steps swept the terrace. He moved onward with all the calm he could command, now securing the corner piece under the left arm-pit, now tossing the other end over his stout shoulder. But his heart was thumping most agreeably, beneath the soft, thick, purple folds.

Even more than Manes, Nirias was delighted at this chance of freedom. Now he could look—he could watch—he could be sure of hearing dear Maia's first foot-fall,—of, perhaps, signalling to the child to meet him, later, on the upper terrace, before meddlesome Manes came between!

Even as the surging hope welled up, Nirias' steps were suddenly arrested.

Exquisite, delicate-voiced flute-notes filled his ear. Pure, sweet, powerful, the melody, as though sung by a living voice, rather than played, soared higher and higher.

"It is Maia — that glorious child!" Nirias cried aloud, in rapturous tones. "She is pouring forth her wonderful notes — to enkindle love!" Nirias' face fairly shone with joy. He felt himself thrilling in response to the vibrating strains. The unseen player's music ever had the power of thus touching the slumbering depths of the merchant's quickly roused soul.

How gay, how joyous was the song Maia played! How the child had learned to pour her young heart out through the sonorous tubes! Nirias felt his heart swelling with rapture. Surely no other fingers, save Maia's, could touch the chord of feeling as could her fingering upon the stops. Now she was rendering tender, yearning strains as though her dear, innocent heart had sounded all known depths of woe. Then came more joyous notes. The stream of liquid ecstasy would drop, suddenly, as though to touch emotion's source, only to soar to upper, higher keys, as though to rival the lark's effortless bubbling.

Nirias found he could no longer control his mounting ecstacy of delight.

With hurrying feet, grasping at his mantle as he ran, he cried out, with ringing voice, as he neared Manes,

"Ah-h'tis she!'tis Maia's touch! I would know it above a hundred fingerings."

Manes nodded, smiled with a look of triumph in his eyes, as he answered,

"Yes — she is always at her best, when she plays thus alone, amid the trees, with only herself for audience."

For an instant, the two men's eyes were interlocked, as though the nature of the unseen player were known to both, and yet their common knowledge were best unspoken. Then Manes rolled the scroll of the play, slowly, noiselessly, and joined Nirias, who had moved to the terrace wall, where both stood, for long moments, fixed, immovable.

Save for the soaring flute notes, the air was very still. Higher and higher the crystalline notes swept upward. The player's touch was that of a master. The thrilling quality of the trills, the melodious runs, and the long drawn notes shook the soul of every listener.

The clash of the metal shields had stopped, as though at a word of command. The voices of the rehearsing chorus and the orchestral discords had been silenced. The execution of the unseen player was the best of lessons, since the phrazing was that of the highest art.

Whirring, soaring, the melody continued to pour forth its soul-moving notes, to the ears of the two listeners. Each found in the music the message it longed to hear. To Nirias it was love's own voice, first whispering, then shouting the glad, triumphant notes of full confession. To Manes, the well-executed trills were overwhelming proof of his own power as a teacher.

Manes presently strained his ears.

The great test was now to be made of the player's skill. Would Maia sail through the difficulties of that intricate, descending scale? Did she but choose, no flute-girl in Corinth could strike, and hold her high notes as securely. Yet — on other occasions —

Manes started. His face suddenly crimsoned. His passionate anger swept him like a flame. For again — and as though purposely, Maia had flattened the higher notes of the descending scale. She prolonged her trill as though with the sole object of proving she could play out of tune — and would — even after having been severely punished for the offence.

"By the fury of Apollo! But how dare she! The same note—aye the very self-same measure! She does it to anger me. She knows I am here, and can hear her!" This was hoarsely whispered. Aloud he cried:

"Maia, O Maia!"

Manes' answer was a quick stoppage of the music. A breathless silence followed. Then came the sound of laughter. Clear, mocking, joyous — as effortless as her trills — the unseen player's laughter rang out. It smote the air — made it ring with mirth. Its light-hearted gaiety was swept to the ears of the waiting, elderly lover. He drank in its accents as though sipping renewed youth from a cup of joy. Manes only heard its mockery. His quick Greek anger stung him, as though each quivering nerve were a pricking bee.

Once more he called; his voice was now thick with rage. "Maia! Maia!" Only the swaying boughs answered. "By the Furies' just wrath! If the whip hath any vir-

tue in it!" The violence of this threat, however, Manes breathed low, for the soothing of his rage. The certainty of vengeance cooled his heat. He bethought him, in this calmer moment, of the clever uses of strategy.

"Maia!— Nirias is come — he has something he wishes to give thee!" Would the lie serve? Manes held his quick breath, as he stood silent, expectant.

Nirias broke the spell. His voice was thick with excitement.

"Let us gain the upper terrace"— and he lifted his mantle.

But Manes held him with an iron grip. A voice Nirias had never known as that of Manes whispered hoarsely, imperiously,

"I pray you, dear Sir,—allow me—let me preceed you. If you will but await me here, Maia, I promise, shall quickly descend."

Manes turned, scarce waiting to finish his sentence, and swept to the steps of the steep terrace, his coarse tunic windfilled as he flew.

Nirias stared, gasped, emitted a few racy oaths, and, seeing a bench near by, concluded to do exactly as he had been bidden. He would sit awhile and rest.

Manes, as he mounted the steep steps, felt his pulses beating mad measures. His righteous anger swept him like a flame. Nirias—pupils—slaves—even the great play were forgotten. He had but one longing, one consuming desire—to find Maia—and to execute his sweet, swift vengeance.

On the upper terrace Manes finally stood silent, expectant. With a crashing sound, some of the nearer tree-boughs were parted. The brush of garments swept across firneedles, made Manes' breath come, in shortened gasps. His eyes gleamed and narrowed, as he watched a girlish form

emerge from its hiding, to move with slow, composed grace towards him.

As the girl neared Manes, she sent a fierce searching gaze over the flame-lit face. A second later, the two stood fixed, rigid. Each was measuring the other with the quick, sure glance of those who live close enough to know every shade of change in the other's face.

What the girl read made her lift her instrument — made her tighten her hold on her Libyan double flute. She held it high before her heaving breast, as though it were a shield. With a disdainful toss of her bright-hued locks, she swept her lids about the ill-kept terrace plane. Then she smiled, with light scorn, as she said,

"I knew it was a lie — no Nirias is come — I should have heard him. Yet, O Manes, as you see, I am here!"

Bravely as she spoke, Maia felt her breath hardén. She knew quite well what was coming to her — her master's face was bent, was lowered — and he looked at her with eyes that showed strange streaks of red.

Yet she spoke to the flaming face — she still eyed, couralgeously — those terrible orbs. "I was playing for myself, you have no right to punish me — for it was not a lesson!" she cried, making a brave plea for justice.

For all answer, her master's hand had fallen upon her shoulder. The pain of his grasp made her eye-lids quiver.

Maia stiffened. Without a word, she turned and moved toward the house-door. She knew the language of those swollen features, of that en-crimsoned brow.

With its look of animal ferocity, the face of Manes was changed to the face of a beast, enraged.

Within the house, Maia turned once again, swiftly, passionately. Her great eyes shone with a strange, piercing light. Pale, her features were also set, fixed. As both stood in the tiny court of the house, Maia lifted her arm,

as though to invoke celestial aid, as she boldly faced her master.

"Remember, Manes — think well!— this time — before you strike. Remember my vow! I made it on the temple steps — only yesterday — as I told you. If ever your whip touch me again, I swore 'twould be the last time! Besides," she added breathlessly, her hand falling — she saw the whip even now bristling above her, "Indeed, truly I was playing for myself — remember in mercy, it was not a lesson." And once more her smile gathered strength.

Never before had she thus dared to face her master. Surely Theseus, the kind god of slaves, must have heard her vow. He was sending her courage. Yet the mere act of breathing she found difficult. Her lips seemed turned to stone.

Manes, whose business in life was to teach tragic gestures and postures, was no reader of a slave's face, when he was in anger. Maia's threat only served to inflame the fury of his wrath.

He stood awaiting Maia, his whole frame trembling with the passion of his anger — and the girl took her place beside a certain column, with still composure.

The swish of a slender cowhide presently cut the air. As the first stroke came, Manes found his voice.

"Ah-ha! Practising for herself — was she? and playing a false note, now and then, just to vex me — and then, to show her power, she laughs — as though she were the mistress! Ho ho! I heard you laugh! and now you threaten! Pretty goings on for a child who owes all she is to her master — and such a master!"

For a breathing space, Manes held the whip aloft. And then it fell again.

The sounds of the falling lash were broken by the tittering of laughter and the rustle of moving shapes. Some of the household slaves had swept in, eager, breathless, from the inner court. Their dancing eyes, and cruel, gloating smiles shone from the open Andron door.

To see Manes plying the whip on his beloved, spoiled Maia was a spectacle that moved Manes' household to rapture. Maia's abasement to their own slave's level repaid them, in part, for the insupportable preference shown the girl.

As the whip fell, the slaves drew in their breath, with sweetened relish. That last stroke, surely, must make the toes fly!

Maia had, indeed, lifted her foot, as the lash fell. The pain it brought was intolerable. Yet her lips were held firm. No moan or groan was permitted to escape. With the knowledge of those grinning slaves yonder, sooner than have cried out, Manes might have killed her.

Manes had not the slightest intention of killing the girl. He meant, indeed, to make her feel his blows, but in no sense whatever to harm her. The whipping of Maia demanded a certain art. Slave though she was, yet, holding toward her master rather the position of adopted child than that of a menial, Manes had never, as vet, sent the girl to the public whipper. Her health and fair skin were of too great importance, in the resources of the establishment, to run any serious risks. Maia's beauty and talents brought drachmæ into Manes' grasping fingers. Her inborn, stubborn pride, and, occasionally, the impish daring of her nature that led her to the committing of a musical crime - such as the striking of a false note, to vex him — while such faults must, of course, be beaten out of the girl, still due allowance must be made for the child's youth and for her sensitive nature.

It was the memory of the shame Maia had brought upon

him, at a recent banquet, the very night before, that had given so fierce a tongue to Manes' whip.

Confound the girl! Why did she stand thus like stone? Why did her vile, stubborn temper keep her lips silent? Why had she not cried out, like a human being, if only to make him aware of the strength of his blows?

Nothing angered Manes more than the one quality, his whip apparently, could not subdue — Maia's unflinching, heroic courage.

As though to punish the whip for its ineffectiveness, Manes flung it, with passionate suddenness, across the court.

For the look he hated was still in the girl's eyes, as she turned to face him.

The eyes that met his were full of proud scorn. The curved lips spoke more eloquently than words the depth of Maia's contempt.

Though still involuntarily quivering from the torture of her punishment, Maia nerved herself to begin at once the readjustment of her fallen slip of a garment. She quickly re-girdled its length — the folds falling obediently into graceful lines.

Manes, as he stood watching the girl, with puzzled, anxious eyes, wondered what in the Furies' name this calm of set, fixed smile could mean. A fresh wave of hot-born anger swept his frame. Yet he must stand and bear it. If the whip had no power to subdue this dauntless nature—what new punishment could he devise to break the girl's spirit?

Presently, a kindlier, softer feeling possessed him. Maia's pale face and the dark rings about her great eyes touched him — in some new, mysterious way. A kindly, benevolent feeling swept over him. Brutes sometimes have such reactions — after their animal ferocity is worked out of them.

"There — there — my dear." He now moved toward the girl — he patted the snows of the young shoulders as they rose and fell before him. "There — you bore it bravely — I must say. And now there'll be no more trouble. That is quite enough — for one day. You'll remember now, I doubt not, to strike the high note a tone higher — next time."

Maia nodded her bright head, almost gaily. She gave no sign of resentment. With a half laugh, as though quite of her master's mind, she stooped, with quick, swift grace, to gather her flute to her arms.

With a slower step she moved onwards, past the rude columns of the small peristyle. Her smile was still on her lips as she nodded now to a whole company of leering, of gaping-mouthed, and of sorrow-smitten faces.

She turned. But Manes was gone. He had passed beyond the door, to the open terrace. Then Maia once more nodded her head.

"He'll be sorry," she said, to the company of masks—as though they knew her trouble, and could sympathize.

With every one of these Maia was as familiar as she was with the outlines of her own straight nose and her rounded cheeks. Talking aloud to this crowded collection was like taking into her confidence friends — nay relations, with whom the girl had been on terms of closest intimacy since ever she had known one face from another.

Scarcely a head among the dozens that seemed to smile back at her, or jeered, feelingless, or mourned, in sympathy, but owed the crown of their high-piled tresses, or the grace of their falling hair-masses to Maia's skilled fingers. Since ever her childish fingers could grasp a brush, she had been taught to dress dead hair, to curl glossy ringlets, or to heat cold irons to give to lifeless locks and beards nature's wave.

As the girl made her way towards the inner court, she

continued to nod, as she continued, also, to murmur her thoughts aloud to the silent company.

"Yes—he'll be sorry enough—when he knows—and that will be a shade hence. Nirias, when he comes—had best be kept waiting."

As she gazed about her, she seemed to be taking, as witness to her great resolve, all and every feature and object of the life she meant should soon — and forever — be done with.

Besides the masks, the tiny courts of the house, as well as every one of the narrow cell-like chambers, were filled with the necessaries of a theatrical establishment. Chitons, himatia, diploi, peasant's chlamys, staves, canes, thrysi, garlands, vases, and amphoræ, were crowding every inch of space.

Some of these Maia fingered, with lingering touch, others she grazed, without as much as a look, and to one tunic that had cost her many a tear, so patched was the venerable fabric, she gave a vicious grab, tearing it to a formless mass of rags.

Then she threw her head back, and laughed — and the laugh was not good to hear. It voiced her life.

When she entered the small room, opening from the court, and before she closed the dirty hanging that did duty for a door, Maia stretched her ears forth. Through the open door of the Andronitis she heard Manes' rich, trained voice making reverential replies. The thicker, stronger, coarser tones were surely those of Nirias. The two were apparently in close talk, on the upper terrace.

Maia's smile parted her perfect lips. This time the smile was radiant—it was flushed with content. The scene was set exactly as she wished—for what she felt was to be the first great act of her life.

#### Chapter II

#### NIRIAS AND MAIA

LEFT to himself, Nirias had not found the time long. He had stretched his limbs, relaxing his frame, with a sense of relief. To feel intensely, at fifty, brings its inevitable reaction. Since Maia was soon to appear, this moment of rest was agreeable. The rude bench felt as soft as though cushion-piled.

Through his half-closed eyes, Nirias swept the great prospect immediately below him. A certain dark mass, to the east of the city, he viewed with peculiar satisfaction. Beneath the thick groups of cypresses, poplars, and firs, gleaming marbles shone.

Nirias opened his eyes. He smiled as he looked downwards. Among those distant tombs, his wife Italia lay. How splendid was her stelæ! The tomb had become one of the wonders of the Kraneion. Even now, months after her death, it affected Nirias almost to tears, to reflect upon the numbers of strangers that were taken to see the famous carvings on dear Italia's monument. It was, and with justice, accounted one of the best masterpieces Corinth could boast, one of Alcamenes' greatest triumphs.

A proud man, it was a never failing source of delight to Nirias, to reflect how splendidly he had entombed Italia. Few Corinthians could mourn their dead wives with as rich a sense of satisfaction. Even as he had clothed and housed Italia luxuriously when in life, in her death he had greatly honoured her.

And, now that she was dead, he, Nirias was free! With freedom, youth had returned to him. How glorious to be

thus re-born to youth,— to feel intensely — passionately — and at fifty to have the dear gods proffering the cup of divine joys! Ah-h but he would drink deep — deep. It was Maia — beautiful, gifted Maia — whom the gods had sent, to work the miracle.

At a banquet, Nirias had heard Maia play. One first look at her fair, perfect young face, at her shapely outlines, and Nirias was turned a love-sick mortal. The usual preliminaries to a rich man's courtship of a slip of a flute-girl had not worked successfully. When he had attempted to draw the child to him, she had slipped from his grasp. On the morrow Nirias had toiled up the hill-side, to hang his garland on her door. Instead of Maia he had found Manes. For reasons of his own, Manes apparently, had kept, and intended to keep Maia pure.

Thus thwarted, Nirias' fever of love ran the common, wild course of such maladies. He had turned strategist — he was now wooing Manes. He was purchasing every new play his agents could procure. He was willing to spend a fortune in presenting them. Maia was worth all this — and more; for there was a look in her face no man could learn to know without longing to evoke it.

When Maia played, this wonder-look dawned on her face. In all Corinth, Nirias vowed, no such adorable mingling of divine, soulful qualities and Aphrodite-like beauty was to be found. Since in Corinth all things were to be bought, why not these? Time, patience, and money brought all things to pass.

As Nirias sat on his hard bench he was busily revolving in his mind a fresh plan — one he felt certain would accomplish wonders — when he heard Manes' deep voice in his ear.

Nirias came to his feet with a bound. For Manes was smiling down upon him with indulgent air.

"You will find Maia, dear Sir, awaiting you in the court"—and the chorus-master waived his hand aloft, as though to offer his distinguished guest his poor house and all it contained.

Nirias flushed, nodded, grasped his mantle with both hands, and, suddenly remembering he had a part to play, answered, with all the dignity he could summon, "You spoke of some new poses the child had learned lately—perhaps she had best rehearse them, before me,—before we decide what we shall give our guests to-night—as a novelty."

Manes managed to govern his lips. It was as well the foolish merchant should continue to think his innocent airs were played to the right audience. His own longing was, to be rid of his patron. His scene with Maia had brought about its reaction — nothing could sooth his quivering nerves, he felt, but the reading of the play.

He watched Nirias mounting the steep incline with gleaming eyes. At last — at last his great moment, his freedom, had come!

Nirias now stood within the rude little court. No Maia was to be seen. From the inner court — the women's and slaves' quarters — a murmurous hum came, of voices and laughter.

Should he clap his hands? Such an action, he knew, would bring the slaves — one or more — into the peristyle. Of all things, their curious ears and eyes were not wanted.

He moved on under the arcade. He looked about him. The company of the masks looked back. Œdibus and his agonized brow; Electra with her tresses tucked up, peasant fashion;— Andromache, with her passion-wrought muscles;— these sorrow-smitten, gaping-mouthed faces seemed to counsel speech.

Nirias took his courage in both hands.

"Maia! Maia! come, my dear — I am waiting!" Nirias cried out, with sudden boldness. No answer came. A russet-winged bee buzzed noisily to the expressive, but silent company. A slave's loud laughter next drowned the bee's humming. The masks grinned and leered, or drew sorrowful faces. But that which Nirias burned to look upon — the vision of a fair, nobly-shaped girl-form, whose roses and snows were clad in a coarse chiton — this vision was denied him.

Nirias was about to do a desperate act—to clap his hands, and bid any one of the slaves show him the door, when his trouble was taken from him.

Maia had shot her head through a narrow opening. Her laughing eyes were fixed upon Nirias, as he floundered toward her.

"This way, O Nirias! The door opens upon the garden—'tis empty—we shall have the place to ourselves."—And Maia's smile was as joyous as was her face.

Nirias stumbled, with rushing feet, toward the girl. Even though he was forced to hold his costly mantle in both hands, that he might run the faster, he believed himself to be treading with the soundless foot of the panther, and to be moving with the swiftness of a bird's flight.

A hundred years old he seemed to Maia's short sixteen years of life! To see this powerful citizen, to behold him change colour, like a foolish girl; to see him clutch at his mantle, holding its costly weight awkardly—lest he trip as he ran; to look upon that portly shape puff and blow—as he rushed, with a boy's eagerness, to squeeze his breadth into the narrow slaves' door; and now, to have him, panting and blown, with his eyes starting, wide with delight, staring at her, as though she were a divinity come to mortal shape—Oh-h surely no other girl in all Corinth had a lover as utterly comic and foolish!

Maia all but laughed outright into her elderly lover's face. She reflected, in time, that her whole future life depended on what she had determined, this, his folly, should be made to accomplish.

Maia collected her quick wits. She assumed a perfect attitude. She dropped her eyes — her arms fell at her side. Her whole form seemed to shrink — as though to veil its perfections within her lilac robes. She presented the very image of a tender, waiting innocence. Maia had not helped to teach posture and gesture to stupid chorus lads, without having kept some of the secrets of the art of acting for her own use.

Her clever play produced the desired effect. Nirias bent over her an enraptured face. Never, he thought, had he seen his divine Maia as adorable. The Maia who now stood before him, Nirias felt he had, indeed, never seen before.

No poet, yet Nirias found himself, unconsciously, quoting Homer.

"'Beautiful-haired, slender-ankled'—O Maia — beloved, how lovely thou art!" And for an instant Nirias stood before the girl, to give his eyes their riot of joy in looking upon her fairness.

No softening oil lamps were tinting the snows of Maia's skin, yet the gold of the sunlight made face, bared arms, throat, and neck glow like tinted marble. Every changeful shade of the violet grey eyes could be caught and noted. Their light shed a sort of luminous mist before them—such as the sculptors sought to convey, to image the soul of great goddesses. The formless lilac garment, with its deeper hued violet border, had been skillfully draped. Beneath the high-worn girdle, the folds fell with statuesque pliability. No adornment suited Maia's face as did roses and lilies. A wreath of these latter flowers framed the delicate oval; and the pure Attic features were the more clearly

accentuated, by the deep Greek furrow of the looped tresses.

"Look up, dearest," Nirias murmured, with trembling lips — his deep-set eyes aflame — "let me see those wondrous orbs. Ah! what heavens of light!" He swept a swift, cautious glance about. Then he drew the yielding shape close.

"Quick! — darling — one — kiss — one — no one sees!"

Maia gave him a timid affrighted look. But she took pains to make her struggle short. Again an impulse of laughter all but spoiled the moment. She could barely command her lips to meet. Once caught, however, she did not measure the sweetness of the kiss. Nirias must be made to feel to the full the magic of her charm.

"Oh-h Maia — beloved!" Nirias panted, with swimming, love-sick eyes. To find her standing thus, with no dreaded impulse to fly from, or to put him away, made Nirias rapturous — elate. Hitherto Maia had always seemed to elude his grasp. A part of her charm, indeed, had been her mingled indifference and affright. The bird most difficult to snare is ever the one most eagerly watched for by the hunter. He bent over the girl. Once again with passionate clutch he drew her to him. He whispered hoarsely in her ear. The temptation he breathed was as old as sin.

Maia heard the words with a questioning eye. Then her lips met, in quick decision. The moment she had been waiting for had come.

Slipping from his detaining grasp, Maia stood at her full height. With dexterous grace she slid her thin chiton below her shoulders. She turned the red-streaked surface toward the merchant's wondering eyes.

"Indeed, dear Nirias, I will come — only — see — this is what I must suffer, when you are not here!" Maia sent her smile across her shoulders. It was that of a suffering goddess. Her eyes rained pain. Turning, she faced her de-

liverer. The child already had learned the actor's trick. Her great eyes had now filled. Her young bosom rose and fell beneath the edge of her lilac garment.

With a shout and an angry imprecation, Nirias started to his feet, for a new man suddenly awoke in him. Before the sight of that fair flesh, encrimsoned, ribboned with whipstrokes, the fountain of Nirias' tenderness flowed forth.

"By the god of pity — but this is not to be borne!" he cried out. His portly chest heaved with emotion. He lifted his arm above Maia, as though to invoke a protecting deity.

Maia's smile would have lighted the darkest of caverns, for she knew now she had won her release. She lifted her luminous eyes, and all the asking power of her soul was poured into her deep gaze.

"Dear Nirias,"—Her eyes beamed with a truly goddesslike look, one commanding immediate submission, and her smile was all sweetness, a sweetness, however, seasoned with assurance, as though she considered the matter quite settled. "Now you perceive why it will be best for you to buy me. You will have me then, for your very own."

This was no slave's face that bargained for a change of masters. Surely, some noble progenitors, accustomed to command, must have sent their authorative message through Maia's compelling glance. For Nirias came at once to a mighty decision. The soul of the girl he loved speaking to him through her moved face had roused all that was generous in his nature. With tender warmth, he clasped the child to him.

"Buy you — sweet one," he cried rapturously. "If it take half my fortune — I'll free you! You shall be your own mistress, as you are the mistress of an old man's heart."

Maia's expressive face, for an instant of hesitation, reflected contending emotions. Wonder, joy, rapture at the success of her design overwhelmed, at first, all other considerations. What would freedom—actual, wonderful freedom really mean? Would she indeed live apart from Manes—from this, the only world she had ever known? Would Manes be sorrowful? Would the hard, but exciting theatrical life end? What awaited her—if she went with Nirias?

Corinth's roar beyond the garden wall seemed to answer. The voices of the gay, voluptuous, luxurious hetærae—voices and cries she knew, had heard, and had envied so often—these voices rang in her ears.

Shrinking, she scarcely knew how, or from what cause — Maia withdrew from her deliverer's clasp. A human, an utterly loveable timidity paled the grey-blue eyes. She looked away from her lover — she stared into the distance, as though once more to question the desirability of this great, this unbelievable future. Her utmost hope had been that Nirias would buy her. Freedom seemed a burden of responsibility too great to accept unaided.

"Oh — I am afraid — afraid!" she cried, with ringing voice. She suddenly flung herself upon Nirias. He and the love he bore her seemed the only safeguards in the terrifying future she had seen, with her quick mind, dimly outlined.

Nirias's higher nature led him to act the better part. His softness in certain great moments was probably one of the secret causes why his women had always ruled him. He drew the child to him, with the protecting gesture of a kindly father.

"My dear — I shall always be near — thou needst fear naught."

With a child's spontaneous outburst of gratitude, Maia flung her soft arms about Nirias' neck — as she cried,

"You are good — as good as you are generous — and I shall try to love you," In another instant she had freed

herself. Her instinct for quick action followed close upon her emotional impulse. "And now, let us seek Manes!" With impassioned energy, she led Nirias onward.

Manes was found sitting, still immovable, upon his stool, in a shady corner of the terrace. The slanting sun-rays were dusting the trees and shrubs about him with purples and with gold. The distant rounded summit of Cyllene was ablaze. The great circle of mountains that made Corinth seem a world shut out from all Hellas — every peak and summit now wore their sunset jewelled lights. Parnassus' early snows were pink as coral. Helicon's double peaks shone like uplifted torches. The gulf, far below, spread out its deepest peacock blues. The landscape below the terrace, far as Sicyon's silver olive groves — swam unreal, phantasmal — fields and city shrouded in gossamer mists of gold.

Manes saw nothing — knew naught. Earth, sky, his city, his world were lost to him. But his pulses were singing. His humour-loving soul was shaken by the wit, by the truth-portraying power of the mighty Athenian.

Wholly in the action of a great scene, when Nirias called out to him, Manes started. How tiresome, just now of all moments, to have his patron to consider! Why should he be smiling, in that foolish, timid way? Why was he holding Maia by the hand? And Maia, why should she appear, also, garbed in her festival robes? Surely it was not yet time for a setting-forth to the evening's banquet.

Out of the confusion of his wonderment, he heard Maia speak. Her voice was sounding new notes. The tones were strangely authoritative.

"Dear Nirias — once again. You must begin at the beginning. Manes has not in the least understood."

As in a dream, Manes heard himself repeating Nirias' amazing announcement. "You wish to buy Maia—"

"Yes - for I intend to free her."

For a benevolent man, Nirias was looking strangely confused. A last wave of caution had swept over him. Standing thus, above the city, Nirias' eyes had caught sight of the trees and tombs in the Kraneion. The memory of his wife's frown had come up before him, with startling clearness. Habit is strong. Nirias insensibly quailed before the vision of Italia's displeasure — and what, were she alive, he would have had to bear from her unrelenting anger. The purchase of Maia, and his subsequent care of the girl began to assume the dulled aspect of duty.

Maia's protecting deity surely breathed inspiration. The girl sent her love-beseeching eyes quickly upward. The warm hand that lay in Nirias' palm, shot its appealing pressure to the merchant's responsive soul. The memory of Italia's frown, like the distant burying ground — swam away into misty distance. It was the dead lady's last struggle for the continuance of her reign.

The chorus-master, by this time, was well out of his dream. He was entirely awake. He had come to his senses with a bound. The better part of his business capital, he realized suddenly, was being demanded of him.

"Buy Maia! but indeed sir, she is not for sale!" he shouted. In his anger and amazement, Manes forgot his manners.

The merchant was equally alive in Nirias' clever, trading soul. He narrowed his heavy lids. His gleaming eyes shot through the slits the born trader's look of mingled cunning and shrewdness.

"Man alive as thou art — all things are for sale — at the right price!" With lordly air, the merchant named a sum that made Manes start away from him, as though to search for a madman's next move.

There was a long moment of silence. To Maia it seemed the very longest of her whole life. Manes' eyes, presently, began to shine. He sent his head back, with the gesture peculiar to him when he came to a mighty decision. The purchase money, he quickly reflected, would buy a house and all its theatrical furnishings, in the very city of the Isthmian games. He already saw himself leading chorusmaster. He would outstrip his great rival, Kephalos — He would show all Greece, how a chorus should be taught and properly trained — how to move and flow like an encircling river, about the chief actors. How he would costume "Œdipus, his Œdipus!" How he would prove his theories true — in the teeth of all critics — about the right dances and songs for Antigone, never yet, according to Manes, rightly given on the Isthmus!

In the stirring whirl of his thoughts, Manes no more remembered the child Maia, than he did his meanest slave. Their daily life in common, the joy he had felt in watching the babe grow into a child, the child become a maiden, the maiden blossom into a full-fledged, an almost, perfect artist; their years of artistic fellowship; his very dependence upon Maia's aid, help, judgment, in every act and duty of his life, this memory of Maia's services and of her talents, was swallowed up in the near, the intoxicating vision of realizing his own hitherto thwarted, but passionately longed-for ambitions. The prospect Nirias' extravagance opened out to him made every sense reel with rapture.

Manes threw back his massive head and his shout rang out —

"By Aphrodite's bright locks!—if all flute-girls and slaves were worth what Maia is to thee—we chorus-masters could soon make our fortunes!"

"Ah-h — but all flute girls are not Maia!" cried Nirias, his exultation flaming in his eyes.

Nirias then clapped his hands. His two body slaves in-

stantly made their appearance. Nirias turned, with his lord-liest air, to the Persian.

"Mago — thou wilt come to-morrow, for the maiden Maia. Let the litter be sent before noon."

Mago swept his master a comprehensive, understanding side glance. With the supple, soundless tread of his race, he took up his position beside Nirias. The Gaul was already in his place.

Nirias bent over to imprint a kiss on Maia's brow. "Till to-morrow then — I leave thee."

"Till to-morrow," echoed Maia, dazed, with her eyes adrift. She watched him go, between his two human props. He and his slaves were a part of the strange, new world her freedom had brought to her. Once his mantle had swept the last terrace step, Maia lifted her eyes to her master. Triumph, glad vengeance, a rich joy shone through the large orbs.

She was standing now close in front of Manes, and she sent her words forth, into his very beard.

"What did I tell you? Have I not made good my vow? Why don't you take the whip to me now—once more?"

Maia laughed the words out with joyous ring. Her delight was complete. To find she was worth three times as much as she imagined she would bring was no small part of her joy. Even as her laughter rang out, Maia drew back, startled — amazed, and her gay shout died on her lips. For Manes' face was a wonder to look upon. It had sensibly paled, and the rudely modelled features were struggling, as though vainly endeavoring to conceal some strong emotion. Maia could have sworn her master's eyes were glistening. Could it be possible he cared — that he was really sorrowful at losing her? Her vengeance suddenly seemed to have shrunk to a mean action. It made her feel poor and

small. She put forth her hands, to stroke the face now bent over her; and her own eyes, she felt, indeed, were filling fast.

"And so - dear Maia - I am to lose thee?"

Manes' rough voice shook; and in his eyes Maia saw the glitter of real tears.

For the first time in all the long years of their common toil, and common triumphs, Manes knew with startling certainty, that always — since Maia's baby-hood, he had loved this clever child.

He strained Maia to him with the fierceness of paternal love. "No! No! thou shalt not—thou shalt not—go from me!" he cried out, a sob in his throat.

"But — Manes — you've sold me you, know —" cried Maia to his unreason. "O-h why did you?"

To Maia had also come the awakening of full consciousness. The passion of anger, her deep, intense longing for revenge, that had swept her to the crest of accomplishment, this wave had spent its force. Her soul, like Manes', was being tossed and whirled about, on the broad shore of reality. No more than her master, could she face the vague, terrifying features of this new world. What had she done? What would happen to her?

And now, what was Manes saying? As out of a dream she heard his voice, and, as she dazedly lifted her lids, again she noted the same strange film shadowing Manes' eyes.

Once again his hand had sought hers.

"Maia, my dear—" he began, as he bent over her a wondrous loving look, "Dear one—before thou goest forth into the world, it is but right that I should tell thee thy history."

Maia laughed, as she shook her head, incredulously—"Alas! and what history have slaves?" and she sent her eyes adrift.

But Manes gave the hand he held a vigorous pressure, And he rose as he said, with an imperious emphasis—"

"Come — and listen — for I must, indeed, tell thee all I know."

And this time Maia heeded his words.

## Chapter III

### MAIA'S HISTORY

MANES and Maia had bent their steps, instinctively, toward the rude bench on which Nirias had sat. For long years it had been the favorite seat of master and slave.

From sheer habit, Manes had sent his eyes abroad; but they were wide, set, fixed;—his whole soul was in his purpose;—his mind was tense with inward drama. So strong was the necessity upon him to speak, to yield up the secret of long years, he felt himself supernaturally led. It was as though the finger of fate was upon his lips—commanding him to speak.

Maia waited. She had even taken time to lift her best. her festival robes, lest the frail tissue be marred by the mould upon the stones. Then she laughed lightly, merrily - for a sudden thought brought joyous surprise. What mattered it whether this much-respected garment were spoiled? She could toss it in disdain to Myleté, the slave girl, whose love of fine raiment would, surely, soon make of her a votary of Venus. Even as she smiled, at the thought of Myleté's delight, Maia raised her eyes, enquiringly — yet she felt no devouring wonderment. Manes capable of any lie. She merely waited, with the patience her hard youth and Manes' whip had taught her, for some clever invention. It really mattered little what he told her - his lie, or even the truth, could alter nothing. She was free - the knowledge of that great and glorious fact flooded her whole being.

Her happy eyes were held, therefore, steadfast, smiling, upon her master's face.

Manes was now looking out across the city. His eyes were fixed upon the opposite hillside. Clasping his hands upon his uplifted knee, he began his tale, with his eyes still upon the mauve hills—

"Years ago — Maia, my girl — I had the longing common to all Hellas — to all the known world. I must see Athens or die! Her great temples, shining out across the sea, yonder, year after year, their glory had seemed to call louder and louder. Well — I chose my time — and with care. It was when the city was freshest from Phidias' chisel. At the time of the great festival, the Panathenæa, Athens was not thinking of Sparta's hate, or of her shields. She was busy garlanding altars and statues, in Athena's honour —"

"Yes — yes — I know, all this you have told me — again and again," Maia burst forth; her impatience had gripped her and was now pricking her, beyond control — "It was all wonderful and glorious. But where does my history figure in all this?" And her lips curled, with light scorn.

Manes' laugh rang out. He lifted his hand to stroke the golden tresses falling below her white wreath. It was one way of gaining time.

"What a child thou art! Well, I'll hasten my tale. On the night following the festival, I betook me to the Ceramicus. I must see the carving and sculptures on the famous tombs. For the tombs were as wonderful as any of the other works of art, in the city—

"The moon was shining, I remember — so were the figures and faces carved on the stelæ. The shadows of the cypresses made the faces very living. There were some so real they seemed standing before you — as if about to speak, tenderly and softly, as those should, who have preceded us — down the shades —

"Well - as I was walking about, thinking what artists,

after all, these Athenians were, what should I hear but a cry. It made me shake and shiver, I can tell you, this cry out of the great quiet — for there's no stillness so terrifying as that of graves.

"Well — I stood, trembling and quaking, as still as the graves, and I hid in the shadow of a tall cypress — for if any of Hecate's tricks were to be played upon me, I intended to be ready. Never did I listen as then I listened —

"The cry came louder and louder. Piercing though it was, I knew it to be the wail of a suckling babe. All fear then went from me. I went towards the sound. As I walked,—I saw thee—my little Maia—Your tiny arms were stretched out as you saw me coming. Small as they were, I saw they were round and warm with life. Again your cry rang out—and my heart rose up within me at the sight of this living babe among the silent graves."

Manes stopped short. Emotionable, impressionable, the chorus-master caught his breath. The scene he had rendered in his vivid, forcible manner, seemed to rise up before him, as though the Maia beside him were still a helpless babe, were holding out her infant arms, and about them both there shone the blanched and quiet sculptured tombstones.

Of the Maia beside him, whose breathing now came in quick, shortened gasps, the master seemed hardly conscious. Manes' eyes were wide and staring, fixed upon the distant, waving lines of azure, that, in the north-eastern horizon, marked, for every Corinthian eye, the nearer intense purples of Peræa melting into the distant mauves of the Attican outlines.

With an effort, Manes brought himself back to his actual surroundings. When he spoke, his voice perceptibly shook, and before he went on with his tale, he gave a deep sigh. He had suddenly remembered all that had happened; how this babe he had grown to love — to look upon as his very

own, more and more become a very part of his life — was now irrevocably lost, would soon have gone into a world as far removed from this theatrical world as was Athens from Corinth.

With a gesture as instinctive as it was impassioned, Manes grasped Maia's hand that lay upon her knee, and, holding it thus, he went on with his tale.

"Whoever had put you there, among the dead, my dear, had done the deed with an aching heart. For you were wrapped in fine linen, the basket you were laid in was of the best weaving, and, upon your baby neck was clasped this chain—"

Manes drew from his tunic a slender golden chain. As he bent toward Maia, he pointed, with his long finger, rimmed with black beneath the nail, to some letters chiselled upon the dull jewelled clasp. The inscription had the sharp, clear grace of Attic cutting.

"As you see," Manes went on to say, "Here is your name, 'Maia,' cut into the very stone. You were no poor man's child, that was quite obvious—"

Maia clutched at the chain. She read her name on the square of gleaming topaz with wide eyes. She could not believe either eyes or ears. That Manes' strange tale should actually be the story of her own infancy, of her Athenian birth — of her parents' cruel desertion — the attempt to realize these portentous facts momentarily paralized mind and body.

The amulet before her rivetted her eyes. As though some sorcerer had worked his art by means of the yellow stone, Maia's gaze grew more and more fixed, and rigid. Even when Manes began anew, she scarce seeemed to heed his voice.

"Putting you there — among the dead — instead of nearer to the road, or on the temple steps,— where passers-

by would see you, and at once — I have always thought, was a clever scheme for reclaiming you,—later on —"

Maia dreamily lifted her great eyes. She found Manes' again suddenly, strangely moved. The muscles of the powerful face were working as though an inward problem were being painfully solved. He collected his wits, presently, and went on —

"Well — my dear —'twas you yourself decided your fate — You stretched out your arms to me — and I took the action to mark the will of Theseus.

"I lifted you, basket and all. I carried you in my cloak, back with me to Corinth. And I have, and you have the gods to thank—that, as good a father as your own could have been, whoever he might have been, has Manes the chorus-master been to you."

Here Manes actually wiped a tear away. On the principle that we love best those on whom we bestow the most, Manes felt to full the force of that tender affection that moved him to bestow so many blows on his favourite pupil.

Maia sat motionless. The weight of her amazement kept her immovable. She stared out at the tinted city—at the violet hills—and, though her gaze rested on the distant pink peaks of misty Parnassus, nothing of all that glory did she see. The loveliest prospect in all Hellas was meaningless beside the raging tumult of her bewildered thoughts.

Out of the chaos of her wonder, one or two facts grew clear—of definite outline. If an Athenian, then, presumably, she was free-born. Her parents might, it was true, have been metics. But foreign-born Athenian residents, she remembered, rarely exposed their children. The full force of Manes' astounding revelation came to her—it lay in the one glorious fact that she—Maia—was an Athenian. Of all the amazing adventures and exciting changes

that had come to Maia, in this one great day of all her life, this fact thrilled her to the depths of her being.

In the ecstacy of her joy, Maia rose to her feet. She beat her hands, as though the soft palms were clinking cymbals. Tossing her head backwards, she faced the sky. Heaven itself must hear the glad news.

"I'm free — free!" she shouted to the radiant blue arch above her. "And I am an Athenian — an Athenian! Oh, Manes — how glorious to be born in the Violetcrowned!" She stopped her dance of joy to beat her glad hands before her master's impassive face. In this, her moment of exaltation, Maia felt, indeed, as though she must sweep her former master to the heights of her own rapture — or her joy would miss its full completeness. She bent over him; she took his hands in hers, she must envelop him with the gladness of this intoxicating moment. He also must rejoice — must be one with her in this greatest of all the moments of her life.

"Listen Manes — listen!" she cried. "Since I am an Athenian — I shall make Nirias take me — and quickly — to Athens. And you shall come. We will see everything together. Think of it — think of the joy before us! All Athens to see — and to know I am one of its citizens!"

As though to prove true her boast, Maia's features showed, as never before, the precision and purity of their Attic outlines. Emotion had paled the girl's skin. The small, delicately-moulded features were clear-cut, as exquisite in perfection of finish as though done into marble.

Manes looked at the face so close to his own, with new eyes. He seemed, and for the first time, to take note of his former slave's title to beauty — and to a beauty of rare distinction. He drew the moved face to him, with gentle hands, caressed it, questioned each feature as though new to him, as he cried, with light mockery,

"By Aphrodite's blue orbs, child! but thy mother — whoever she may be — had best reclaim thee, and swiftly else the youth of Athens will make Nirias' beard as grey as mine, in a week's time!"

Maia's face softened. "Ah — my kindred," she breathed. "We will tell every one my story. Athens is small — all that is heard in the Agora is known, and quickly, it is said, throughout the city."

The girl turned her gaze toward the far distant Attican range — greying fast in the twilight's purpling. The marbles of the Parthenon she had seen so often glittering, on fair days, from the lofty Acro-Corinthus heights — to know that she — Maia — Manes' former slave and pupil — possessed the right to feel an ownership in such Athenian, such world-famous glories, made fresh thrills of joy sweep her frame.

Maia felt, indeed, her very soul shaken. The visions her quick imagination conjured up, made her pulses sing. Once more she was as far away from the rude stool, and the huge form beside her, as she was oblivious of Manes' presence.

Since indeed, she was doubly free, she would do wonderful things. Yes—she would make Nirias take her to Athens—she would have Manes and the slaves go, and at once, to the Agora. Once her story was told, her parents would come forward—they would be delighted to acknowledge a daughter possessed of so many accomplishments. She would present poor old Nirias as the generous man who had freed her, her father would give him a splendid banquet, at which would be the beautiful Athenian who would wish to marry her, after having heard of her beauty and talents.

Such were the thoughts that coursed through Maia's childish mind. All her future lay mapped out before her,

as clear as the shining coastlines of Attica, from the heights of the Citadel.

Another picture, suddenly, rose up. Manes' boastful words came back to her. He—a father to her! Would any father have treated her as he had done? What had her life been but that of a slave and the hardest of hardworked slaves? Her toil in that house of never-ending work—the long hours of standing, of playing to dull chorus youths, to mark their awkward steps, the vigorous scourgings for the least musical mistake—the keeping in order of the whole theatrical wardrobe, and, wearied though she might be unto death, yet must she dress herself with care, and play and play to drunken banqueters, Oh-h the hateful, wearisome life!

Why had she been made to endure all this, since Manes knew her to be Athenian born?

Then Maia remembered the law.

Exposed children became as slaves to those who took them and cared for them. In spite of her knowledge of this law, Maia felt her blood suddenly boil with anger, Never had she known the power of rage thus to shake the frame — thus to make one feel aflame one instant, and ice the next. Maia was a true Greek, in the swift changes that came to govern her mood.

Still in the fury of her wrath, Maia turned to face Manes with eyes starting from her head, and her words came chokingly, as she gripped Manes with a fierce clutch —

"Since you knew I was Athenian-born, why did you treat me like the lowest of slaves? tell me that!"

Manes' laughter shook him, as he loosened the slendertipped but strong fingers. He looked down into the crimsoned face, and again he passed his free hand over the gold of the falling tresses with a loving caress, as he said in a gleeful tone, "Ah-h, my pretty tigress—not so tight! You have sharp claws." Manes now laughed with real heartiness. The girl's anger amused him. "There, there, that is better;" he cried, as his large, powerful hand closed over Maia's small, pointed fingers. He laid her hands one over the other, against the folds of her chiton. "There—a girl's hands are prettiest when they lie curled, so,—like flowers in her lap. You have pretty fingers, my Maia—as all the youth of Corinth will soon tell you—for you were never born to live solely with the old, and with grey beards."

Maia's laughter was now joined to Manes'—she had made a second sudden, but more mirthful spring at her master's beard.

"Let go! my girl, let go! Ah-h—you will? You'll try your strength on the old, you'll scratch, will you, or bite, when you fail to strike? There—calm your high spirits—save your claws' skill for others, who know not, as I do, how cats and women can scratch—you'll need both strength and claws in the life that is to come to you—for all your freedom—And now come—We've had excitement enough to whet the appetite—it seems to me—for one day."

Maia echoed Manes' laughter. She circled his arm with her two hands, as both made their way towards the house.

Before entering the now darkening court, she withdrew her clasp; she turned to face the glory that lay about and below the terrace. As Maia looked, she sighed. It was the last time she would watch the colour flame, and wait for the stars to grow, in the purple sky. This, her home on the terrace, would be left forever. On the morrow, she would be a part of the glowing, splendid city yonder. She would be lying on a sumptuous couch, with slaves to run before her.

# Chapter IV

### ON TO ATHENS

DURING the months that were to follow, of all Maia's dreams, only one was to come true. She won Nirias to fulfil her longing hope. After scenes in which tears and outburst of anger were succeeded by tender cajoling, Nirias consented to take her to Athens. And Manes was to be of the company.

Nirias had yielded; but the unspoken hope that made now of every waking moment in Maia's life the animating purpose—her longing to find her kindred—this deeply cherished desire would have small chance of accomplishment.

Nirias planned the journey with the care a man takes when he has a treasure to guard, that has become dearer than life itself.

He chose the time of the year when Athens was at its gayest, when the crowd of strangers from every part of the world would so pack the streets of the chief city in Hellas that the advent of even so great a beauty as Maia would excite but little comment.

As for Maia's wild project of finding her people, in such a multitude one might as well search for the buried statues on the Acropolis.

Nothing of all this did wise Nirias say to his little Maia. He dazzled her, with the planning of the journey on a scale of magnitude that seemed to her untravelled inexperience, to embrace every quarter of the universe. They would take ship for the Ionian Islands — they would see Melos, sacred Delos should be visited,— they would touch at

Nauplia,— and make their way thus to the nearest Athenian port, at the very time when the city was at its wildest moment of gay worship.

Unsuspecting Maia shrieked for joy, as the entrancing voyage was talked over.

"You are the best of men! the dearest, the kindest!" and with one of her tender impulses, she flung her glad arms about Nirias, and covered his radiant face with kisses. Then her own smile died into a sober look, "I must make all necessary preparations!" and she whirled herself away, followed by Nirias' happy laughter.

How she would haunt the shops! what wonders of rare tissues, of fabulously costly embroideries she would discover! And what marvellous new combinations she would devise! Already in Corinth, whatever Maia wore was the height of the fashion, the next day.

Nirias, meanwhile, proceeded to business.

His first care was to write to Crates of the Piræus. This Crates was his oldest and one of his dearest friends. Like Nirias, the Piræan had made his own fortune. Like him also, both were become famous. Crates, more than any other Athenian, had done the most to extend Athenian commerce; his ships were in every harbour. And the Piræan's great house on Munychia hill, just above the port, was known far and wide for its statues and costly tapestries.

Under ordinary circumstances, Nirias would have gone direct to Crates' house. But Crates had a son.

This Ion, it appeared, was the most desirable of sons, from Crates' point of view. From the standpoint of a wary and jealous middle-aged lover, Ion was one to be avoided as carefully as one would the plague. He was handsome, clever, had become the intimate of the most exclusive Athenian set of young aristocrats, and was fast becoming an accepted favourite.

Such a combination of qualities and successful achievement would frighten the most courageous of men. Added to these serious disadvantages — from Nirias' point of view — there was a still greater deterrent — one that made going to Crates entirely out of the question. This precious Ion had but just returned from a prolonged Asian journey.

Since Nirias could not run the chance of offending Crates, by appearing in Athens without announcing his arrival, there was but one thing to be done—Crates must be taken into his—Nirias' confidence. Nirias carefully made plain, in his long letter, all the many excellent reasons there were for his own landing at Phalerum instead of sailing into the Piræan harbour, and the wisdom of having as short a distance as possible to traverse, to gain the theatre. Would dear Crates meet the ship at the smaller Port?

## Chapter V

#### AN INVOCATION

It was the third day in Athens, of the festival of Dionysus. Long before dawn, a trim ship glided over the faintly rippled waters of the Ægæan.

A single figure stood out upon the vessel's prow. Shrouded in violet-hued draperies, the motionless watcher swept the great scene with eyes that roved far and wide. The restless orbs seemed to pierce the light mists as though to search for the first sight of the hills and the low uplands.

A shepherd's call, across the nearest hillslope, brought to the girl her first sip of rapture. She started, as a long, glad shout rang out. From one hill, and then from another answering greetings came. As the gay shouts resounded through the clear Attic air, Maia laughed aloud, for pure joy.

"'Tis the shepherds who are the first to feel the stirrings of the kindly god!" she cried. And then she listened, with all her power of hearing, that no pleasant sound might escape her.

Hill echoed back to hill the festival greeting. Over the now tinted grasses, the grey-backed sheep moved, like a slipping river. Pipings and flutings rose up,— the delicate air resounded with melodious tunes.

A thrill that coursed like flame swept through Maia's quivering frame. Every sound seemed to touch the very depth of feeling. And no part of the great spectacle seemed strange.

As Phoebus sent his heralds forth, as above Hymettus the pink clouds caught the rising glow — Maia lifted her arms. With hands high held, she opened her lips and sang. The famous Apolline hymn came as spontaneously as though she had sung thus to dawning Athens not once, but again and again. And as the melodious notes rose up, the features of the great prospect grew clearer and ever clearer.

Lycabettus, that had worn its shroud of grey, now shone like an uplifted javelin, fire-smitten. The Megaran hills were long planes of light. Parnes' brow was rose-flushed—it had felt the kiss of dawn; and trembling, the far-distant peaks swam into misty outlines—their tops rimmed with gold.

Hills and skies appeared to send downward a something spiritual — an unearthly lightness, an ecstacy of some sort. It was as though Dionysus himself, the mysterious instigator of sensation and enthusiasm, already held in upper heaven his brimming wine-cup. This generous god — the miracleworker who could transform the dead, inert earth into blossom-crowned Spring, meant men to worship him with rapture and transport. Therefore it was, the hills sang, and the skies wore a golden chaplet.

Long before Maia's song came to an end, the tears were streaming down her cheeks. It was not alone her lips that sang—her soul had gone forth to meet every wondrous feature of the splendid scene in awed rapture. Ancestral fires burned within.

And thus it was Maia went up to Athens.

## Chapter VI

#### THE FEAST OF DIONYSUS

On this, the third morning of the festival time, two young men issued from houses as different in aspect as were their fortunes.

Scarcely had the sun smitten the tops of the hills, when Ion, fresh from the home bath, his perfumed locks correctly curled to take the right Alcibidian fall over the brow, swept his rich purple mantle through the courts of his town house. He had chosen his dwelling outside the walls. A countryman's son, Ion had brought to crowded Athens the love of wide skies and free winds; his house stood close to the Lyceum.

Before leaving the peristyle, Ion gave the freedom of the day to every slave within the courts. With a shout, the little army scampered to their quarters. Gleeful, tuneful snatches of song rose up; and the sonorous Greek voices followed Ion down the street, as he made his way to the road leading to the city.

Ion smiled, as he murmured, softly, "To slave as to freedman, to young and old, to rich and poor alike, how subtly the kind god works! The soul seems lightened of every sorrow!"

As Ion passed into the ever-brightening streets, he himself felt the stirrings of the miracle-worker. Dionysus, the dear god, was pouring forth his joy-giving spirit. Ion walked as a man goes forth to meet a happy destiny; some wonderful thing was surely to happen to him, else never would he feel such an unwarrantable elation.

Who would be the first to pull at his mantle? Would it be Timoleon?

Timoleon, only a few moments before, had left his mean, small house, one that had two entrances, since it was both a shop and a dwelling, and was already making his way through the packed streets of the lower end of the Agora. Though he had no such substantial reasons as had Ion for finding life a banquet, and Fortune a smiling goddess, still even Timoleon felt the sweet influences of the festival season. Like other advanced thinkers, Timoleon laughed, in secret, at the Dionysus myth,—and aloud when it was safe. For Timoleon's fortunes, since his misfortunes had come to him—since his father's ostracism—had largely depended on the clever wits that lay beneath his own dark locks.

In spite of his more or less empty purse, little by little Timoleon felt the rising pulse of excitement. The god was beginning to evoke delightful sensations even in those who disowned him.

At a sudden turn in the narrow street, Timoleon all but ran into Ion's arms.

With a shout of laughter, the two young men, with the glee of boys, did, indeed, open their arms, in reality. They gave each other mockingly, the embrace that the pressure of the crowd had precipitated.

"Ah-h dear Ion — Well met! And how fine we are! A fair soul in a fair raiment!" cried Timoleon, admiringly, and, for a wonder, without envy.

Ion threw back his garlanded head. Hyacinths and lilies framed a face radiant with life, and beautiful with fire-touched enthusiasm.

This, his first great festival since his return, had swept every chord of Ion's responsive nature. The music, the crowds, the glistening gods, the steaming altars, every contributory feature of the festival had wrought a fierce keen rapture.

"Timoleon! — dear man! Come! there is a wonder abroad, it appears — a new beauty! But then, on such a day — even the oldest, seem new — young — immortal! This is indeed a true Dionysia. Never before, it seems to me —"

"But what were you saying — a new beauty?" interrupted Timoleon, sending his eyes restlessly abroad.

Ion had swept his friend's shoulder with his arm. The rich purples of Ion's himation contrasted well with Timoleon's saffron garments. Their faces were almost on a level. The two wreathed heads were now bent, now twisted, were now following each fresh, fair face. Yet to hear of a fairer one stirred the young men's pulses. "Yes, they say she is a wonder — Glaucus — but look! — but here — of all men whose mantle should be perfectly draped, comes Glaucus himself — and look at him!"

A flat-nosed, elaborately dressed youth emerged, with a leap and a bound, from out a thick crowd. He was dashed, with a certain violence, against the two young men's breasts.

Gasping, spluttering, almost sobbing, Glaucus told his friends what had befallen him.

A group of shepherds, it appeared, had been dancing in the very middle of the street. Catching sight of Glaucus' sumptuously clad figure, they had instantly surrounded him. His trailing himation, his heavily wreathed and perfumed locks, his jewelled and garlanded shoulders, his tall cane, and his Molossian hound had touched the humour-loving gayety of these Attic hill-folk.

Round and round raging Glaucus the merry band had swept. His barking dog, Glaucus' mad, frantic gestures, his nimble but ineffectual efforts to escape through the satyrlike forms of his tormentors, had made the rude fun flame into grotesque hilarity.

Still spluttering, with wreath and garland awry, his mantle twisted and covered with dirt, Glaucus entertained his friends with his disgusting adventure.

Timoleon laughed his fill; he actually helped Glaucus to make himself beautiful. Ion had already re-adjusted the fallen garlands, as Timoleon busied himself with the jewelled clasps confining the inner tunic.

"Well — well — of all things, that our Glaucus should be thus roughly handled," cried Timoleon, in mocking glee.

"You may well say so — I might as well have been a ball or a puppet," almost sobbed Glaucus, as intently engaged over his disordered toilet as though he had been a woman.

"Oh well—the world is always jealous of novelties in dress," soothingly cried Ion, his eyes meeting Timoleon's in a riot of mirth. "But come—you look now as fresh as a maid from her bath—That's right, keep between us—Timoleon and I will play Scyths to your comeliness—but for heaven's sake forget your late annoyances—my Glaucus, and tell us of the new beauty you have discovered—"

Glaucus, quieted, at ease once more, and happy in being between his two friends, proceeded to narrate the adventure of the morning.

At dusk, it appeared, he had been coming up from Phalerum in his town cart. He had passed the previous night at the port, in gay company. Among the thousands of vehicles and foot-passengers was a certain chariot—"drawn by bays singularly the match of yours—my Ion"—and on the back seat, had sat, erect, with veil swept aside, a creature so utterly lovely, that he, Glaucus, had actually let his reins fall. Never had he seen her like. She had

violet blue eyes — and hair — and a skin — and such shoulders —"

"Who pray was with her?" cried Ion, quivering. It excited him to hear of such beauty.

"That is of all things the most amazing — Beside an elderly man on the front, who — of all men — do you suppose sat beside her — my Ion — but your father — my boy!"

"My father!" Ion started — stared. His breath was fairly taken from him. He stopped — letting the crowd circle about him. He was whirled he knew not where. He had to run a few onward paces to catch Glaucus' answer.

"Yes — he saluted me — but rather as though he regretted having seen me!"

"Of all wonders! And to keep me in ignorance of all this—and to tell me he would not be in town until the hour of my banquet—"

Ion's indignation was so warm his friends burst into delighted laughter. Timoleon clutched Ion's arm the tighter. "There is one thing—and only one thing to be done— We must find this new wonder—and your father, and make him introduce us—"

This purpose gave to the young men an added stimulus. They breasted the crowd as though plunging into a sea. Like the waves of the sea, the festival gayety closed in and about them. At a certain street corner their passage was blocked by a long line of Bacchantes, on their way to take their places in the procession. They went their way soberly enough now. They were walking as sedately as other women walked; their time of ecstasy was not yet come. The long hours of the day were between them and the rapture-madness, when, with loosened locks, ungirdled draperies, and transport-driven frenzy, they would make of the night one long mysterious act of worship.

The white-robed line, whose moving grace was like an animated frieze, took many minutes to pass.

All the city now rang with music. From street corners, from gardens, from porticoes, from all open places, glad, exultant voices, singing, shouting, soared upward. Celebrants were gathered thick about smoking altars. The throbbing notes of sonorous-tongued trumpets made the air quiver with penetrating vibrations. The more delicate notes of harp, of zithers, of single and double flutes, pierced the ear like a continuous whirring of insect's wings and of birdnotes.

Glistening, glittering, everywhere the statues of the gods rose up. The marble brows and shoulders, as were living heads and breasts, were thick with garlands. No god but what was niched in roses;—scarcely a man or woman moved that did not leave behind the trail of perfume. Even the usual fœtid odors that rose up from the streets, were deadened. For, added to the scent of flowers, an animating sea wind now brought a touch of salt to the lips. There was a freshening coolness abroad that made the mere act of breathing a delight.

Athletes, with coarse, scarred faces, but with forms like gods, everywhere decked the streets like living statues. And in and out, threading the crowd like airy butterflies, there passed and repassed, then glided hither and thither, the supple shapes of hundreds of hetærae.

The glances of these ladies were obviously more dazzling to rude shepherd's eyes, than were the sun rays on bare hills, at high noon. Fishermen from the Piræus, come in gala dress to take a mariner's look around, stood, gaping, blocking the way. Some soldiers in their holiday chlamys, which they wore with extra jauntiness, were crowding about the half-post, half statue of the household Hermæ. Gaily they jeered at the lazy trademen whose industry, in a trim-

ming of their god, had, apparently, only been born after breakfast. Groups of fashionable young men stood about, with their hands on their hips, and an arm flung about a comrade's neck, affecting the latest fashion in disdain.

"Look!" cried Glaucus, at a sudden turn in the street, where the poorer slaves and country folk were already closing in about the wine bowls,—huge bowls that were set at the street corners, for free worship of the god —"By the god Pan! but there are my tormentors!"

A swarm of half-drunken, vulgarly-costumed hill-folk made a sudden rush for the three young men.

Pan's goat-like features leaped and pranced before Ion and the two annoyed young noblemen. Bacchus, with distorted, bloated face, crowned with grape-vines, green and lustrous, blew wine-drugged breaths, with laughing buffoonery, into their faces. Coarse-voiced Bacchantees — no priestesses these — but rustic imitators, trailed dust-stained robes and uncombed locks, swirling in mid-air their rudely-trimmed thyrsi, as Pan squealed through his reed, and Bacchus hiccoughed a hymn to Dionysus.

When the two young men were released from the noisy revellers, Ion was nowhere to be seen.

Further up the street, Nirias and his party, who had come up from Phalerum, had been forced to flatten themselves against a house front.

A noisy shouting had filled the air. The crowd of merrymakers, before, about, around them — mostly peasants, clad in goats' skins — was suddenly swarming down upon the party. The narrowness of the passage in this bend of the street increased the din and shouting. The smell of garlic-tainted breaths befouled the air.

Maia found herself suddenly alone, unaccountably flat-

tened against the sides of the nearer house walls. The blue of the sky was obscured. A cloud of faces, bestial and inflamed, surrounded her. One, with a satyr's grin was suddenly, terrifyingly close. Maia shuddered — she drew her draperies tight about her — she called as loud as her fear, that was shaking her like an aspen, would let her, "Manes! Mago! quick! help me! save me! or I know not what may"— then her breath was taken from her. She could only squeeze herself tight against the wall. What could it be that was so hot, so foul,— what was the drunken voice hiccoughing?

"One kiss — my beauty — Venus — hic! owes me — hic that —" As out of a nightmare, Maia heard the voice shout.

Suddenly with a rush and smooth as wind, a beautiful stranger dashed into the midst of the peasant crowd.

To catch the peasant about the waist, and then to lift the writhing body aloft, holding him thus for a second, that Ion might toss him gaily in the air, as though he were a ball,—and, after he had had his sport, to deposit the limp, inert lump in the very middle of the street—all this had taken but the space of a minute. The next, slightly puffing, Ion had called to his slaves to dust his sandals.

The peasant now lay in a heap. He was dazedly rubbing his head. His companions were shouting at him their derisive laughter, and Ion heard the loud buzz of applauding voices about his ears.

But the beautiful being, whose loveliness could not be hidden even by the hastily gathered folds of her veil, was nowhere to be seen.

Ion questioned the group of gentlemen who had applauded his athletic feat, as to who the beauty might be, and by whom she was accompanied — but no one could tell him. As soon as Ion had come to the lady's rescue, a Persian, a

slave apparently, had rushed to her side, and had swept her away.

Though Ion made an exhaustive search of the groups immediately about him, the lovely stranger was, indeed, nowhere to be found. Could she, by any lucky chance, be the new beauty? Ion pondered,—the rare grace of the affrighted gestures, the plastic suppleness of the writhing form within the violet draperies, the gold, snows, and carnations shining within the veil,—surely this was she! No lovelier creature had Ion seen in Athens since his return.

The Piræan now hurried onward; at least he would be certain to run across Timoleon and Glaucus. With three such pairs of eyes, the wonder would surely be found.

Maia, in her turn, had looked for her preserver diligently. When Mago had swept to her side, and had hurried her to Nirias, whose state, at finding Maia gone, was "pitiable to see," Mago said, Maia had turned upon the unoffending slave with swift, uncontrollable anger.

"And must I never have a moment of freedom—? Must I forever remember who pretended to free me, that he might thus keep me the more securely bound?" was Maia's heated, impassioned outburst.

When Nirias grasped her mantle, with frantic delight at finding his adored one apparently unharmed, Maia's temper had not cooled. The stinging lash of her scorn so stung poor Nirias that he shrank backwards—was well content to walk with Manes, and let Maia have, at least, some semblance of freedom.

On such a day, however, the most righteous indignation must give way to the gay holiday spirit. There was contagion in the very air, in the glad songs, in the perfumes, in the festal throngs, and Maia had not gone a dozen steps before the festival rapture had re-captured her.

Maia, indeed, felt herself to be walking on air. Since the first moment of her landing, since the first outlook of the distant temple-crowned Acropolis, and her glimpse of the divine little city carrying up from the rich plain the long lines of glistening altars, statues, and stately temples to the lofty citadel, like a sumptuously clad priestess mounting temple steps to make magnificent offering, Maia had felt the rocking ecstasy of triumphant delight.

Triumphant! For she knew, and for a certainty, she had come into her own city!

No object, however novel, seemed strange; the aspect of streets or houses,— the very faces carved into the walls and the benign Hermæ—how familiar! how dear!

Maia had entered Athens as might one of the great Greek heroines. Thus would Electra have felt, on coming to Mycenæ.

Maia's quick Greek pulses were, therefore, in perfect tune with the Dionysiac festival. Surely hundreds of times she had been thus abroad, had been hustled thus, had seen every altar dressed like a bride, and had breathed the clear, brisk Athenian air that clouds of incense could not clog!

To the wondering looks that were showered on Maia, as she moved, rapt, elate, with veil swept aside, that she might the better see all — to the admiring comments that followed her like a chorus, Maia was wholly indifferent. If indeed she heard the murmur of delight her appearance aroused, she heeded it not.

On and on she walked, as one come to take possession.

Now her beauty loving eyes were wide with delight — some new master-piece, in the street of the Tripods, where one moved between a never-ending aisle of master-pieces — caught her gaze, holding it spellbound; what a multitude

of offerings! how thick were crowded shrines, tripods, sculptured pedestals on which rested wonderful lyres with golden strings, or the jewelled and tinted figures of an Apollo!

Wherever one looked, was to sip intoxication. Greek energy spoke through the wide-glancing, excitable Greek eyes, in eloquent, impassioned gesture, and in melodious moving and moved speech. Merely to be among Athenians, on such a day, was to feel one's self above all other mortals.

How different to the heavy, mercantile, features of a Corinthian gathering!

Maia had no sooner made this unflattering reflection, than her observant eyes were caught by a group of stately Athenians who were making difficult headway through the thick masses of peasants, soldiers, shepherds, athletes, and strangers that packed the entrance to the more open spaces of the precinct of the theatre.

Ahead of the party walked a number of slaves. These were making heroic efforts to clear a passage for their masters.

Behind the slaves came the master — a dignified aristocrat "who passes his nights at banquets, and his days in disputing with the philosophers" Maia thought, as she surveyed the clear-cut features, with their tell-tale lines of fatigue and the crimson touch of Bacchus.

The ladies directly behind the stately banqueter rivetted Maia's gaze. Shrouded in their veils though they were, the three ladies betrayed their high station, by every motion and gesture. They kept their eyes upon the ground; their slaves further hid them from view by holding close the fringed parasols, and two, at least, of the ladies walked with unsteady feet, as tread those who rarely go abroad.

"The other—she with the marvellous transparencies—surely she must be a foreigner—no lady, Athenian born,

would go abroad in such raiment — even on a festival day!"

So great, indeed, had been Maia's interest in the group that, forgetful of her own appearance, she had slowed her step, and her face was fully revealed. Her veil had fallen, unheeded, upon her arm.

"By the fair face of Venus, but what a lovely creature!" Maia started — and stood at her tallest. The eyes of the advancing party were, she found, fixed full upon her.

The master stared, with wonder-struck eyes as he uttered his ejaculation. And the three ladies had stopped; even through their veils Maia felt the curious, searching feminine gaze concentrated upon every feature, every detail of her form and costume.

Maia returned the fixed stare. She swept the party with deep, soulful glance. The elderly aristocrat, he who had cried aloud, at first sight of her, did not interest her. But on the more matronly figure, she who held herself with a pride and dignity that proclaimed a great race, and on the lovely virginal form of her who was the daughter of the house — whose corn locks shone through her shimmering veil — on these two Maia looked with all soul in her eyes.

What if such as these great ladies should be found to be her kindred? Something in the slender grace of that lovely maiden reminded Maia of her own youth — before she was fully born — before she became a woman. And at the sight of that protected innocence — of the child whose virginal charms were guarded as was the shrine of Pallas Athena, a strange, inexplicable sense of injury possessed Maia's soul. She could have cried aloud — "You have wronged me! — wronged me!" And the next instant, she had turned away, smiling at her absurd fancies, at her overwrought state.

Maia had but just rejoined Nirias, when a cry rent the

"O Critias! Come! come! Oh-h I shall die if I do not catch her — do not see her again! Did you not see for yourself? 'Twas Myrto's very image! My God — I feel the earth giving way!"

Succeeding the shrieks, Maia heard a confused medley of voices that drowned the lady's loud wail.

What could the cries mean? Had the mother — that matronly dame seen in her — Maia — a fancied resemblance to some beloved one? Had she too, felt the strange, mysterious drawing — the cord of a common subtle instinct of attraction?

For long moments, Maia walked as one in a dream. She felt herself shaken, to the very core of her being. She who had so yearned to find kindred, who, since first stepping foot on Attican soil, had asked of every fresh face the great question — of every veiled face, in mercy to lift its covering, had the answer to her longing — to her prayers — been sent her?

But look, search the crowd as she might, stay her steps, linger to make a pretence of wishing to delight still further in the gayety, the excitement centered in the famous street, Maia could catch no glimpse of the Critias group.

Maia was hurried on. Nirias was feeling the effects of the long walk, the crowd and the noise would "soon finish him," he said — they must reach the theatre as quickly as possible.

Maia now followed, obediently. A fresh hope had bloomed. Perhaps at the theatre, she might catch a glimpse of the ladies. The slaves, she recollected, had carried cushions.

## Chapter VII

### MAIA'S TRIUMPH

THE sun was near to its setting as the last notes of the chorus swept up from the orchestra to the over-arching skies. Those who had been in their seats since daybreak, now rose, stretching aching limbs. Yet Athens stood, long after the play was ended, to clap frenzied hands, and to shout itself hoarse.

The new actor from Ægina, a handsome youth, in his portrayal of Antigone, had captured the critical, emotional audience.

Tears still bathed Maia's face; and those of her neighbours were also bedewed. Antigone's heroic accents, her sublime utterances still rang upon the air.

As Maia moved downward, one with the crowd flowing over the stone seats, the chorus groups were still moving, swaying, dancing, before her eyes; their mounting odes were clashing, melodiously, above the rustling crowds. Brilliant purples, crimsons, and golds were also still dazzling her eyes.

Maia continued to move langourously; she let her scarf and mantle trail. Her throbbing pulses made this breaking up of the vast audience—as moving a part almost as any of the long drama of the day—at once intensely real and singularly remote.

As she made one of the thick groups of hetæræ, who, like herself, had been seated in the spaces set apart for women — in the upper tiers of seats, just beneath the colonnade — their gay childish laughter, the soulless look

of most of these her sisters moved her to envy. Why could she not take life as serenely, as joyously as they? Why must she be longing for worlds unattainable? Why must she seek kindred — dull family relations, doubtless, who would bore one's life out? Why, in a word, could she not be content with Nirias, her great house on Corinth's rising slopes, her slaves, and her life of luxury?

Antigone's thrilling accents soared upwards. Above the noisy chattering groups she heard the compelling voice of duty, of family, of something afar — as of long slow growth, — call imperiously to her sentient soul.

Then, she had dropped to earth. She was only one among her sisters. She was fluttering downwards, one of the flight of gaudily plumaged birds, whose yellows, blues and lilacs dotted, with bright colours, the prevailing whites of the vast crowd. Slaves were hastily gathering together cushions and bags, bottles of scent and fans. Youthful, joyously smiling faces rose out of the ever-moving audience to shout loving salutations to the gay votaries of pleasure, about her. These greetings made Maia feel still more separate — as remote as was mighty Acro-Corinthus from the Acropolis.

In the midst of a circle of priests and priestesses Maia found Manes. He was uttering, as usual, his critical comments; as usual he had no thought of whom they might wound. She heard him cry out:—

"Ah — I dare say — it is part of Alcibiades' policy of magnificence to costume a chorus so as to astonish the people — but I tell you, art is as sensitive as a woman — you over-dress her — and she loses her purity of line — her divine simplicity. Now in Corinth —"

Maia noted the amused smiles circling the lips of Manes' listeners. She thought it time to break up the talk. She moved towards Manes; she pressed her way between the

venerable priests whose whitening locks were bound about with floating tenia. Three beautiful virgins wearing highgirdled chitons, whose flowing tresses were rose-garlanded, were standing near.

"Where is Nirias? And ought we not to be seeking the boat?" Maia said, as she finally reached Manes.

She wondered at Athenian courtesy;— for the circle about Manes widened — gave her place. There was a murmurous buzz about her ears. She felt rather than saw, the staring of many eyes.

But her own eyes had caught sight of the graceful sculptures traced on the backs of the famous priests' chairs. She was following the dance-motion of the agile god.

The murmur did not wholly die away; it still pursued as she and Manes moved to that part of the outer precinct where Nirias was making his farewells to Crates.

As she stood waiting, Maia's eyes took in the great scene. The buzzing voices still about her were only a part, she thought, of the universal buzz and bustle of moving thousands.

The great theatre was now all but empty. Its semicircular grace sloped up the great rock. The statues beneath the upper colonnade were saffron-tinted. They carried the eye aloft to the rugged, unhewn eastern end of the Acropolis. But the rough surfaces were being turned to carmine tints. And the line of the columns of the Parthenon, seen aslant, was aglow with the golden sunset hues. Temples, the gods and goddesses in their shadowed pediment, and the labyrinth of altars, temples, and statues in the upper precinct of Æsculapius, were swimming in light. The magical moment of its transfiguration was come to Athens.

Under the glow that pulsed to the very zenith, Maia moved onward — away — as in a trance.

The road to Phalerum — the way to their boat — ran between tall walls and watch towers. But country smells and scents came over the walls. Out of the stillness, and the busy tumult of her thoughts, the clear harmonies of the chorus-singing of Sophocles' famous ode rang out. Amid the maze of impressions, emotions and incidents of this day of days it was strange — and yet sweet — to have the famous hymn ringing in her ears. She could hear the chorus chanting the phrases. How did the strain go? Was that the key?

Maia hummed the hymn. The first lines of the first strophe had barely left her lips:—

"Mighty Power, all powers above, Great unconquerable love.

when a voice close behind startled her. The melody died upon her lip. The voice was pleading—

"O gracious lady — pray sing the ode — give it to us as it should be sung!"

As Maia turned, she looked her fright—her dazed amazement. For 'twas not one—'twas hundreds of admiring eyes and speaking lips that met her gaze.

This following crowd had gathered silently, mysteriously. Maia had not heard their noiseless stepping. She had walked on and on, her absorbed reflections had made her oblivious of all else save the tumult of feeling within.

The thick press of faces now before her, she noted, was mostly male. Here and there, behind those close in front, a woman's high-piled tresses were seen darting in among the masculine bared heads. The crowd was most respectfully still. What were all these eager-eyed people trying to see? Maia turned her face now this way, now that. There was nothing remarkable in either the people ahead or—

Then Maia's very heart stood still. Her lips seemed strangely athirst. A sweet delirium mounted upwards — it touched her brain with fire.

For, as she had turned, all innocence, at each fresh view of her face, the sonorous voices about her chorussed

"Ah-h! For love of the graces — stay — thus — move not!"

"Corinthian wonder — did the Cyprian indeed mother thee?"

"Aphrodite's very self! Look at the colour of her eyes, the true sea-greys!"

"And the fall of her shoulders!"

"The arms — to the fraction of an inch, are telling us what the lovely limbs must be!"

Maia felt herself trembling, paling, blushing. Where could she go — where run? What insolence! What a want of manners!

Yet there was no real insolence. The voices were, indeed, almost reverential. The tones, the nature of the comments were those beauty-lovers might emit, when circling about a new statue.

This Athenian tribute to her beauty was sweet to Maia's ears. She found herself studying to walk with becoming dignity; she swung her steps into rhythmic grace of bearing.

All the length of the road between the walls, Maia, followed by her train of admirers, walked on and on. Nirias and Manes were deep in talk. The slaves had formed themselves, on either side of their mistress, into an informal escort.

Maia heard whispered conjectures as to who she was, or might be; Crates' name was handed about, in wonderment; she could hear Nirias' defects, knowingly voiced; and for her new fresh epithets were invented, and were flung forth as hierophants scatter flowers before deity. Maia sipped the nectar of this praise. An ineffable delight filled her. Never before had she known such completed joy. To have every turn of one's body, each outline studied, descanted upon, compared to immortal masterpieces—to hear such phrases ring forth as

"Alcamenes - where is Alcamenes? See her he must!"

"Surely some one can be sent. She will not be gone for a good shade yet!"

Ah-h — what was the finding of cruel-hearted parents to such thrilling salutations?

Even in the full glow of her pride, Maia smiled. At once comic and sad, an inner voice whispered

"Behold — ye came to find kindred, and have found none. Yet Athens claims thee!"

At this thought Maia felt herself strongly moved. An irresistible longing seized upon her. She could have flung her arms about the nearest close-bearded figure. She could have cried forth her delight, have sobbed out her pain. If all knew her story — would not her friends be found?

Almost had Maia resolved to face the crowds, to speak, openly, before them all, telling them her history, when two beautiful dark eyes caught her glance, held it, made it quiver. Her bold resolve died within her.

A young man, and one very beautiful, had pushed himself forward. He had made the crowd about him of festival merry-makers seem suddenly coarse—of plebeian mould and feature. Involuntarily, as though in homage to one of superior birth and breeding, the crowd had parted. Maia and the Athenian thus eyed each other, for a long full moment, with none between. And then both started,—for each had recognized in the other the rescued and the rescuer of the shepherd's outrage.

"They are of one beauty — they should mate," whispered low, a bearded, goat-like featured man. He walked close

to Maia. His slanting eyes travelled now to one, now to the other, with a look of such joy one might have thought he had fathered Ion.

Maia had heard the goat like-looking man's whisper. It brought her to her senses. The young Athenian's beauty, his deep thrilling glance, one that told her more than all the loud laudatory chorussing, had for an instant enchained her steps. She had felt neither power to breathe nor to move. Then she was as suddenly released. The man's embarrassing outburst had broken the spell.

From the deck of the trireme, a few minutes later, Maia felt a certain high courage returning to her.

The crowd now was circling about the yellow shore. In another instant the Keleustes would sound his chant, and the boat would be off.

Maia's eyes swept the figures massed upon the sands. She had wholly forgotten they were there, solely to do her homage. She was only intensely, acutely conscious of finding all those hundreds of faces meaningless. There was only one perfect brown oval — one shapely form — one —

Maia's travelling eyes now caught Ion's powerful gaze. For a long instant the four eyes were interlocked. Then slowly, the two beautiful mouths curved. Each was smiling, across the widening blues — into the other's smile.

But the Keleustes had sounded his notes. The oarsmen's blades, as one, smote the waters. Above the Keleustes' melodious chant, a thunderous cheer rang up to the skies.

- "Evoë! Evoë!"
- "We greet thee! We salute thee!"
- "Incomparable!"
- "Lovely Corinthian wonder return! Abide with us! We will worship thee!"

As the cries and cheering smote Nirias' dull ears, he

blinked his eyes. What a curious, excitable people were these Athenians! They could not see a fine ship moving off without voicing their admiration! And Nirias settled himself among his comfortable cushions with an amused grin. Better than foolish Athenian excitability were these deep pillows, after a day that might well have killed outright a less vigorous frame!

But Manes had understood. His dancing eyes, aflame with new light, met Maia's. He seemed to be watching, questioning, conjecturing—his piercing gaze said as clearly as though his lips spoke—"Well—here's your audience. And now what do you intend to do with it?"

Maia answered the challenge. Her lips curled. Moving forward to the very centre of the white deck, she lifted her mantle and her eyes. Smiling, with the very smile she had given when she had cried out, months ago, "Well—and why don't you beat me, now? Where's your whip?" she said, with triumphant air,

"I think I remember O Manes! some of your excellent counsels—'If you wish to produce a great effect—give your audience the impression of complete self-mastery—and—above all else—take time to do all things well.' Back please, I am about to begin—"

Manes took the place assigned him. Then for very joy, he held his breath.

Maia had taken her pose. She stood alone upon the satiny deck. With a gesture of incomparable grace she flung her mantle behind her. With as much composure as though she were within her chamber, she began slowly, with infinite art, its intricate adjustment.

On the shore the crowd was bending forward as one man. The glow in ever deepening skies lit up the eager, moved faces; the clear light italicized each movement and

gesture, as it also harmonized tunics, chitons, and trailing himatia into a happy blend of colour.

Above the violet-blue waters Maia's shape rose up—the one figure against the gauze of the hills of Argolis.

Against that gossamer background, as she well knew, every curve and outline of her pliant form was seen to fullest perfection. Out of the descending folds of her finely pleated chiton, her bared throat, shoulders, arms and face showed their snows and roses as might her prototype, when rising from the Cyprian foam.

For a long distance, with arms outstretched, she held her filmy mantle to its fullest breadth. Thus held, the firmness of her round breasts, the droop of the line from sloping shoulder to the curving hips, was lost in the folds that hung about thighs and knees.

Suddenly, swiftly, with dexterous fling, the lilac gauze was swung aloft, to crown the golden tresses. Its lower ends were caught, were quickly wound about the lovely shoulders, were swept tight as an enveloping sheath about arms and hips. As a shard clasps its flower, the mantle enwreathed Maia.

When all was as it should be, Maia stood erect, immovable. With the state of those who uplift cornices, she lifted her head. She showed tall, symmetrical — a column of grace, violet tinted.

Thus had Maia veiled herself, with Athens for a mirror. Years after, in the torture of imprisonment, Ion was to comfort his despair with the memory of that picture—of Maia's shape, now bent, now curved, now upright—fluid as the violet seas—now rigid as marble. How the lilac-draped figure was to haunt his fever-licked eyes!

## Chapter VIII

## IN THE PAINTED PORCH

On leaving the theatre, Ion had lost sight of Timoleon and Glaucus. He had been caught between a boisterous group of Thebans. Once free, he had found himself outside of the theatre, amid the statues and altars of the precinct.

He had half turned to take the road to the Odeion, when he heard cries, and the rustle of a moving crowd rising up from between the walls leading to the sea.

What and whom were the crowd following down to Phalerum? Whom were they acclaiming? True Greek that Ion was, his itch of curiosity pricked him to follow.

From the shore every movement, each gesture, and all of Maia's poses, Ion had watched with breathless eagerness. At the first glimpse of her face, he knew her as the lovely creature he had rescued from the clutches of the drunken sheperds. As he watched her, in all her beauty of plastic grace and exquisite perfection of outline, his experienced and difficult Athenian eyes were never done with the joy of looking. He felt himself shaken by a dozen conflicting emotions. Rapture was laced with mad longing to know all there was to know — who in the name of the Graces, could this "Wonder" be? Where had she learned her art? And if, indeed, a Corinthian, whose companion was she? — surely not that elderly merchant's — with his yellow skin, and his sagging cheeks? — surely it was not he?

As the ship had slipped away, lost to sight, the "Incomparable's" violet draperies melting into the dusk of the

purple sea distances, Ion felt himself possessed by one single longing, one overmastering intention. He would haunt the Colonnade, the Gymnasia, the Agora,—no gossip in Athens should escape him, for surely others beside himself, in all that crowd, would make the necessary inquiries, and all would soon be known.

Meanwhile, he would take a turn in the Painted Porch. Among all those assembled there, some might have seen the "Wonder."

Even at this festival time, Ion could count on the famous Stoa being full. Timoleon, even before Ion's Asian journey, had made it the fashion to be seen strolling under the arcade about, or just before sundown. After the afternoon's work in the Gymnasia, after a long drive into the country, or fresh from the excitements of a cock-fight, there was still a shade to kill before the evening's banquet. Timoleon had made clever use of his discovery; at this hour the most beautiful Porch in all Athens was almost empty. Here, therefore, about Eumolpus' barber shop, he had drawn the more exclusive members of the leading aristocrats, those younger men whose opinions it was necessary every political leader should test, as well as their willingness to follow a given lead.

It was Timoleon's business in life to feel the rising Athenian pulse.

Long before he reached the steps of the Porch, Ion caught sight of Timoleon's slender, graceful figure leaning against his favorite column.

Ion sent his joyous greeting ahead of him,—he called out, through the thickly grouped statues:

"Ah-ha — Timoleon — well met — I counted on finding you here —" and with a spring whose lightness proved Ion's high athletic condition, he swept to the shaded floor of the Colonnade.

Timoleon's clever face showed no perceptible change. He smiled, but there was a touch of light scorn in the curve of his delicately finished lips. His gay holiday humour had vanished.

"Ion, by all that is magnificent! And with what a lordly air he carries his mantle! One would think he owned all Athens, and had a god or two for an ancestor!"

Timoleon smiled down with the old familiar insolence veiling his keen-eyed vigilance.

Ion laughed, as he took his place among the others of the group already assembled.

A year ago Ion's sensitive Greek nature would have been stung to the quick by Timoleon's taunt. He was hardly conscious himself of how much he had gained; for he scarcely felt Timoleon's sneer. His eyes gleamed, but with amusement rather than anger.

Nothing — thank the gods — had changed! The column was as deliciously warmed as Timoleon's manner was stimulating cool. Both were precisely at the same temperature as he had left them.

Ariston was as smiling, as genially sympathetic as Glaucus was feminely conscious of the cut and fall of his curls and the correct toss of his mantle.

Even Endius, the fiery orator, was even now trying to collect his audience—and the group of the younger men were beginning to surround him.

No-o, nothing, had changed — save only that he, Ion, had gained a better control of his temper — for he answered Timoleon's taunt with a smile.

"How came we to miss each other — dear men? But lucky it was that we did — for I have had a most wonderful adventure! Come — come closer — for what I have to tell is of the greatest importance."

With one of those natural and loving gestures that made Ion beloved of men, he swept one arm about Ariston, and the other about Glaucus.

Timoleon forgot his role of scornful indifference; and even Endius, the orator of the group, stopped his haranguing about war to sip the honey of gossip.

Ion told his story in brief, graphic phrases. As he described the scene,—the emotional Athenian faces were flame-lit. Eyes glowed, the bronze skins were encrimsoned, and the breath of all came in quickened gasps.

When Ion had ended, having told all there was to tell, Glaucus struck his tall cane upon the concrete with a delighted gesture. His cry of glee made all heads turn, eagerly, toward him.

"You say the beauty was with two elderly men — dear Ion?"

"Yes," Ion answered, with growing wonder in his eyes.

"And one had a deep crimson mantle, richly embroidered, in silver and purple, and the other man had a beard, and wore a chlamys?" Glaucus questioned, as though he found a peculiar relish in the situation.

"Ye -- es --"

"Well — dear boy — let me give you a piece of excellent advice: The next time you wish to make the acquaintance of a new beauty — remain at home — your father needs watching!"

A shout of rapturous laughter greeted Glaucus' finish. The humour of his suggestion was the better relished, as Crates was known to be the most exemplary of men—a model for all widowers with a luxurious and extravagant son.

Ion's expression of mingled amazement and annoyance furnished the laughing chorus with continued enjoyment.

Ion's voice finally made itself heard.

"What, pray, have these two elderly strangers and the divinity to do with my father?"

Glaucus swept a caressing arm about Ion. And then he brought his fair cheek close to Ion's deeper bronzed face.

"The beauty I met, this morning, at dawn, along the Long Walls, dear boy, was with three men; and your description answers perfectly to two of them—the third, as I told you, was no other than your good father!"

The announcement was greeted with shouts of delight. Ion's expression of mingled amazement and vexation was a further source of amusement. The young men made the most of the moment. Ion was being patted on the back; others were offering to drive him on the instant to the Piræus, while Glaucus was crying, above the gleeful tumult;—

"Yes—that would be the best plan,—Seek out your father—and when, under the home peristyle, you have wrenched this secret from him, come share your knowledge, generously, with us!"

"We'll make an expedition to Corinth — or to Melos — or wherever the 'wonder' is to be found" cried Timoleon, with a secret relish at Ion's evident discomfiture.

Ion had, however, recovered his self-possession. He was able to smile with all his usual good humour, as he answered:

"'Tis I will head the expedition — dear men — and now, till we find her, what of the new beauties?"

"There's nothing very wonderful," lisped Glaucus.
"The newest beauty in Athens is my thoroughbred mare."

There was a shout of derisive laughter. "Your mare—she's as old as Korinna—"

"She's already foaled. She's -"

"She's a wonder - Ion. You know horses - I'll show

her off to you to-morrow," cried Glaucus, hotly, forgetting to lisp.

"All right — we'll ride out into the country together."
"And what about your own horses? How does the training go on?" cried Ariston, laying an affectionate hand on Ion's shoulder. Of all the men in the group, he best loved the handsome Piræan. He was rich enough, handsome enough, and married, and happily, had no envy of Ion's successes with women. His own prick of jealousy came

"Ah — dear boys," cried Ion, his whole face now irradiant — "Congratulate me! My trainer writes me the horses were never in better condition — they will pass anything,"

from the stinging knowledge he was not rich enough to

compete at Olympia in a chariot race.

The circle closed in about Ion. Every man's breath came again with quickened relish. Ion might be a despised Piræan, yet, since he was to compete at Olympia — and with his own horses — horses raised on his own farm — his coming elevation before the eyes of all Hellas — as a wealthy charioteer, placed him, at last, on their own level. Every man felt his coming race to be theirs. The bets already exchanged on the issue made each man as eager for news of the trainer's condition, for the speed and health of the horses, as though the race was indeed to be their own. Not only his own set; but all Athens and the Piræus had had their eyes and minds fixed upon Ion and his great venture for long months.

"You'll have Thebes to fight," Glaucus said, in an aggressive tone. He had bet, over the wine-cups, nearly half a talent on Thebes.

"Yes—" slowly answered Ion—" so I hear— the state sends a magnificent car— this year. Two of the stallions came out of Castor— from our stud." "Well — at least you'll not have Alcibiades to run against — with his seven chariots."

"Perhaps — had I run at the last Olympic he might not have carried off two crowns and been thrice acclaimed — by the herald!"

Ion's coolness delighted the group.

"Hear him!" mocked Timoleon, yet with eyes gleaming—for the talk of a race had sent his slower blood to pulsing, "Hear him! One would think him a professional—already following up the games, like an athlete—a hundred times a victor!"

"Well — would you have me show the white feather?" Ion burst forth, with sudden passion, his handsome face flaming. "Of course I believe in my winning — I intend to win! I have the best trainer in all Hellas — and my horses are the fastest — the surest-winded — the least startled by new things, and the chariot is built to weigh — to an ounce — what the horses can best carry — while every one knows how my groom trains down, once he must. With such advantages why should I not win? I tell you I shall! I'd put all my fortune on the stake. Who will put up his against me?"

No one spoke. But every man breathed yet harder. Ion's enthusiasm, his passionate outburst, had made every man in the group seem to smell the fresh dawn rising over the green hills of Olympia, to see before him the sanded elipse of the Hippodrome, the bending, shouting crowds, to feel, in a word, even at that distance, the thrill of all the greater moments of the race.

"For my part," cried Ariston, giving his mantle an impatient toss, "I wish Olympia were over — I hate waiting. Five years seems an eternity."

"Isn't that a bit of Sardian amber?" suddenly queried a tall young man, whose fingers were laden with rings. He

had taken no part in the talk. He had been devouring Ion with his eyes. He had always considered him the best-dressed man in Athens. These new adornments demanded a close study. The deep-eyes jewel, set in Ion's long cane, appealed to this fashionable lounger far more than did an Olympian race.

"Yes," Ion replied, somewhat indifferently. He liked to talk about horses rather than jewels. "It was a present from the Lydian King."

"I thought he usually gave horses," Glaucus was quick to say.

"And so he does, but," and here Ion stopped, "But who, pray, may that be?"

A countryfied looking man, with a long brush of hair and thick beard, was seen making his way towards Timoleon. He grasped his himation in loutish fashion. A large portion of his bared, hairy legs was on view. To every one's surprise, Timoleon's greeting of the stranger was unaffectedly hearty. He withdrew with him, to a distant end of the Colonnade. They were soon in deep talk.

Those he had left burst into feverish speech. Who could this astonishing-looking individual be? Where had Timoleon met such a creature?

"It must be one of those Sicilians. There are any number of dirty Segestans infesting the city just now," cried Glaucus, in disgust. He hated politics. He was a peace man — but in secret. Belonging to a fashionable circle had its advantages. He now never dared avow his principles. They — all his set — were all for war — for any war.

"Ah-h—this is interesting!" cried Ion. He felt his pulse stirring. Politics always went to his head as neat wine never did. "I heard something of this on ship-board."

The group circled closer about Ion.

"And what did you hear, my Ion?"

Timoleon had returned. Swiftly, noiselessly he had swept to Ion's side. The clever face, glistening now with eager animation was close to his own. His lips were wreathed in smiles—and his arm was now about Ion's neck. How well his own secret little plot was working! They were bristling—all of them—any one could see, with curiosity. He, Timoleon, would go on pulling more strings. "You were saying?"

"That I heard some talk of this Sicilian affair on ship-board."

"Ah — already!" chorused the voices. The men drew closer about Ion.

"Yes — the Captain and some of the passengers had arranged the whole campaign!"

"Indeed!" Timoleon attempted to touch his note with satire. But he was himself shaken by Ion's news. The outer world already talking war—and Athens not even—as yet—knowing her own mind! The whole thing a mere muddle—a political plaything—and the part Athens was to take already world's talk!

"It would be interesting to learn what part we Athenians were to play — in this well thought-out scheme!" He was almost talking his thought out.

"Well — our part was not to be a glorious one," Ion laughed, as he recalled the ship's prophecy. "We were to be soundly beaten — if ever we took up the quarrel."

"Ha! ha! ha!" the laughter rang out lustily from the strong young throats. Athens beaten by the Sicilians! The thought was as humorous as a witticism of Aristophanes.

"It is better we were beaten now than later, as we surely shall be," cried Endius in a voice so deep and rich its tones rose above the mocking laughter.

"Hear! Hear!" mocked Glaucus, stamping noisily with

his cane. His Spartan dog sat up on its haunches and barked. The shouting had excited him. Glaucus laughed gaily. "Behold—even my dog recognizes a prophet. He greets the oracle among us—discoursing wisdom!" He was doing his best to kill the threatened—the almost certain talk, with its political platitudes.

But politics was the trade—the sole trade—of these excitable young aristocrats. Endius was known as a powerful speaker. The circle closed quickly about him.

"You think that we should take up this quarrel?" Ion asked hotly. He was conscious of a speeding pulse. He knew himself now—at last—to be alive—at every pore. What it was to be in Athens once more—to be close to the living heart of the universe!

"Indeed I do," answered Endius, with dignity. He had gathered his mantle. He held it tight, with his left hand, that his right might be freed for expressive gesture. "And for the best of reasons!" The circle closed in the nearer. "If the Syracusan fleet is successful—if they overpower the rest of Sicily—what is to prevent their joining the Spartans—the Corinthians—all who are against us? The Syracusans are Dorians—we must never forget that. As Dorians—Sparta, Corinth, all the Peloponnesus are their natural allies. It is only a question of time—and of strength, when this alliance will come about. Unless we go to the rescue of the Segestans—the Sicilians will surely join Sparta. Before such forces Athens' fate is sealed. She can never fight all Greece and Sicily. All the gold and gods in Attica cannot save her."

The words, uttered in Endius' most awesome tones, struck like a knell on the hearts of his hearers. A slight shudder passed through the group. Faces fell. Some god — bent on vengeance, doubtless, was passing over-head, darkening the gold of the sky. Did the spirit of a baneful prophecy

indeed possess Endius? Men turned to each other with the look of those who have heard a hateful truth, and yet propose to make light of it.

Every one now talked at once. Denials, arguments, refutations, rumors, clashing opinions — the golden air and the Colonnade echoed to the war of their words. Only Timoleon — like some evil sprite that had heard, among mortals, the proof of the mischief he hoped to find brewing — only Timoleon's face glistened with rapture. What news for Alcibiades!"

Glaucus, meanwhile, had wormed himself out of the group. There would be barely time, he reflected, for all there was to be done before the evening's banquet. He had lifted his eyes; the golden glow, he saw, had died out of the sky.

"By the holy grapes!" he cried, in a horrified tone, "all this war-talk has made me forget my banquet — and my beard! It is as long as a goat's — I'll see you all, later on."

"I join you --"

"And I - my beard, too, grows in an hour."

One by one the gilded youth took up their accustomed walk towards the barber's shop. Some entered the low door. Others stood outside, or dropped into the seats designed for those who must wait. Aloft, above the young men's heads, a joyous band of merry nymphs faced a sorrowful group of Persian captives. Pictures, statues, and the living groups lay in deep shadow. For the sun was now wholly set.

Ion had almost gained the street level, when he lifted his head. Timoleon stood, alone, as though in deep thought. Slowly, he presently descended the steps.

"You go my way, Timoleon? Will you come for a

bath? My new Persian slaves give one in the Persian way. It is very refreshing."

Timoleon let his foot drag. He was delighted at the invitation. He longed to get more news—out of Ion; and to have the promise of a fresh experience at the same time. Nothing could have pleased him better. But he wanted Ion to feel he was conferring, rather than accepting a favour.

"Yes — I will gladly go — I have heard already of that wonderful bath of yours. By the way — I forgot to ask you — are Persian women beautiful? — as beautiful as this new divinity?"

They walked on, between the rows of statues, and the talk fell upon beauty — on what really constituted its true elements, since no one race or people hold the same standards.

## Chapter IX

## A BREAKFAST AT THE PIRÆUS

THE very morning after the foregoing scene, Ion at dawn, had a rude awakening.

His body slave Persia swung open the tapestry that hung before his master's door. Persia entered the narrow celllike room with a bound. There was no time for the customary care with which Ion was usually awakened. What Persia had to say was of such vital importance, the slave found the greater difficulty in framing his words.

"Master! Master!" he called forth, quaveringly.

Ion had already leapt to an upright upon his narrow bed. His eyes, now fully dilated, rendered back their messags—the message of apprehended disaster. Disaster of some sort had come to him, else never would Persia show such pallor beneath his bronze.

"What in the name of Hecate is the matter?" Ion cried out.

Ion's answer came in dramatic fashion. A form, slim, half naked, running as a man runs in sleep, his body swung forward with a will that seemed to have lost its piloting power — such a shape swept across the court. First it flung itself against Ion's hangings. Then, with a thud, it came to a drop. It now lay prone, across Ion's threshold. With a low groan the man's hanging tongue lipped the concrete.

"As you see, Master — he is spent!" softly murmured Persia. "Yet he has a message to give — I dared not let

him wait." Persia lifted appeallingly his great eyes, as though to let them say what he dared not.

But Ion was bending over the prostrate form. He touched the man's heaving shoulders. Bursting though he felt himself to be, with the rending torment of his fears, doubts, and dread, even at that crucial moment Ion was kind.

"Tell me — my boy — what is this news? There is nothing — nothing wrong — at the Piræus?" Ion felt his heart's beats suddenly die, as he asked the fearsome question. He knew now how he loved his father.

The man was gasping out the words.

"It is — Pollux — the grey — stallion — he — he has gone — lame — he fell." With this word it was the runner's head that fell. The effort to hold it erect, to bubble forth his words had been the last over-strain. The exhausted forces within voiced their collapse in a prolonged inarticulate groan. The youth's form lay like a fallen shroud across Ion's threshold.

For a long instant neither Ion nor Persia stirred. After the first quick leap of relief, at learning nothing had happened to his father, Ion's heart had turned to lead. The blow that had fallen stunned him so thoroughly, that he, along with his runner, seemed to lie there, dead, inert. Absently, vacantly, he sat upon his couch, looking out into the dim court. A great hope seemed to be going down with the stars.

The news the runner had brought might have most disastrous consequences. Pollux, of all his four entered for the great race, was the most famous stallion in Arcadia. Of distinguished pedigree, his breeding and training had been watched over only as horse-breeders rear colts fathered by a long line of race winners. As the leader of the team, Pollux's record for speed and his equine perfections had been carefully considered. If Ion's car came off victorious, at Olympia, it would be largely due to Pollux's unsurpassable qualities.

The crumbled tablet leaf the runner brought Ion from his trainer, at the farm, yielded some comfort to Ion's gnawing fears and dread. Pollux had fallen, and his right foreleg was strained; but there were no bones broken; a splint and a week's rest ought to bring him round. In the meantime, there was always the doubt as to whether a stiffened joint would appear. In that case, the trainer asked, would the Master advise the breaking in of one of the other stallions—those they had talked over as possibly best fitted for the race?

After reading the lines of the leaf, Ion sprang to his feet. Now that action was demanded, Ion was all energy, fire, decision. His powers to think and to act came to him with redoubled force.

Standing in the middle of his chamber, Ion clapped his hands. A dozen slaves came pattering across the court.

"Take him up — bathe him — rub him warm. Then force neat wine between his lips — he'll soon be himself." And Ion pointed to the runner.

With noiseless ease the stiffened shape was lifted. Strong arms carried their burden to the slaves' quarters. To the Persian, Ion turned with less assured voice and gesture,

"You are to go, to sit beside his couch," he whispered, hurriedly. "Never take your eyes off him—feed him, dress him—yourself—mind. Then get him out of Athens—as soon as he can straddle a mule. Ride with him—night and day till you reach the farm. I follow shortly—." Ion's voice was actually hoarse with excitement. Whatever transpired, the news his runner had brought must be kept secret. With the bets already booked on his car, in Athens and the Piræus, the secret of this disaster must be

kept. In a week's time Pollux would be either as good as he ever was, or of no account whatever.

"Shall I wait to dress you, O Master?" Ion heard Persia ask, as he followed Ion to the room where the bath was awaiting him.

"No-o - send me Eupolis - and write me daily, from the farm."

The Persian saluted his master and disappeared.

As the revivifying stream of cold water was poured over Ion's vigorous frame, the warmed blood brought freshened energies. Ion's buoyant Greek nature soon had its rebound. He thought of a dozen instances of celebrated stallions going lame, and of their subsequent miraculous recovery. Since there were no broken bones that must be re-knit, Pollux's accident would be a mere incident; an animal of his build and pedigree would recover sooner than stallions of commoner stock.

One fact stood out clear as the now breaking day; Ion felt he must see his father, and at once. Crates must be made to perceive the necessity of his—of Ion's—proceeding to the Farm, without delay.

Having decided this point, Ion gave his orders for his town cart to be brought. He would start for the Port at once. Even as he called out his command, he remembered, with a pang, that this was the day on which Crates had consented to give a breakfast, to Timoleon and their set. Confound the fates! how badly things were arranged for a man with his pet stallion gone lame, and a grave secret to guard. Swear against the Fates as he might, Ion knew he he had only himself to blame for this prospective feast. He had talked his father into giving this breakfast, by playing upon the chord of its political importance. If the Sicilian war was really to come off, Crates with his world-wide commercial interests, ought to know the worst — and all that

the war party believed would surely be the best, that was to happen.

These arguments Crates had found irresistible. Ion's recent return, and a new masterpiece, recently purchased — a tiny Apollo — said to be a true Phidian — were the reasons given out for the Piræan's invitation to the group of young Athenian nobles Crates proudly called —"my son Ion's set."

Ion's insuppressable buoyancy now brought him quick solace. Since the breakfast was inevitable, he would use the occasion. It would be the best of all ways of explaining his coming departure. As public an announcement would rob the secret of all mystery.

On his way to the Dipylon, Ion drew his quick-stepping bays up short, before a certain priest's house. A long-haired man came out from a tiny garden. He held a myrtle bough in his hand. A shrine stood within the green enclosure.

Ion said a few words to the saintly man. Then from his high seat he bent forward. A shower of silver was poured into the priest's hand.

The priest, as he caught sight of the same, stared, gasped, and grasped, instinctively at his myrtle boughs. He dashed backwards, plunged the bough into a fount of holy water, and flung the bright drops outward, upward, with a desperate effort. He managed, before Ion had fully captured his reins, literally to shower upon Ion's face and bared arms his lustral baptism.

Ion's joyous laughter was the priest's answer. The latter's loud invocation to Hippias, the horse-loving god, followed Ion down the torturous street. "Your rich offering, dear sir," the priest called out, "shall be devoted to peculiarly choice selection of sacrifice!"

With the priest's blessing following after him, Ion was

in a mood to laugh at this timid yielding to a pious impulse. Ion, like all of his class, shared in the growing unbelief in the divine nature of the hundred gods of his city. But Ion found, as did his father, that he was a countryman's son. He had the instinctive caution, at critical moment, in matters of religion. If gods there were, it was as well to be on the safe side. He dashed a drop of holy water from his beard, even as he laughed. Yet in his soul there was a feeling of satisfaction in knowing the gods were being importuned.

Thud! Thud! It was good to hear the Thud! rythmical drop of his horses' unshod hoofs. Their silken coats, narrow flanks, and small spirited heads spoke to his mounting hope - surely one who owned a stud such as his had no reasons for despondency. Even were the worst to happen — other stallions there were besides Pollux. Yet. at the bare thought of running his race without Pollux, Ion felt his heart in his throat. Across all the distance of sea and mountain slopes, the beautiful creature's reproachful eves seemed to meet his here, beneath these radiant skies to say "Who can lead as I shall lead? Who as quick as I to feel the mounting flame of excitement? Whose muscles are as supple - whose breath as deep?" And at the thought of his darling's staving qualities. Ion's glad shout of iov all but burst from him. No! No! No! Pollux would never go lame! Such a miracle of equine perfection would go as swift in the teeth of the wind, as ever he did — in a few days' time!

With the happy assurance warming his heart Ion lifted his eyes. He saw the outlined hills quivering with light. The morning sky was at its bluest. The warm spring, with its mounting pulses, the juicy scent of growing grain and a thousand shrubs and flowers — this new-born hope, springing from Demeter's breast, swept upwards from the

fertile Attic plain, filling the morning air with freshness and perfume.

Thud! Thud! Thud! the soft drop of his steeds' unshod feet beat in tune with this wider—this more universal rhythm. It was impossible not to feel the contagion of such spirited life, such leaping forces of things human and divine. How easy, how natural, beneath Greek skies, to feel life to be a joyous gift! The very light seemed to weave a celestial coronal. All things seemed possible—achievement appeared merely to wait on desire. There was divinity in the very air—its yielding quality caressed hope—its prick of vigour was a perpetual spur to activity.

As Ion picked his way through the crowds of carts, cars, laden asses and mules, and the throng of foot-passengers, his quick mind roved, as a young man's will, from one world within his mind to another. The war-possibility loomed large. "Well— if war is to come—I am heart and soul for the venture! I am with Timoleon in this—Athens is growing too used to easy ways. We are, indeed, too eager about women, and games, and drinking bouts and cockfights—by the way—when did Ariston say Agesilaus was to have that match? I must enter that query—."

Flinging his reins to the groom who sat beside him, Ion steadied the tablet that hung from his girdle — to mark his reminder.

As he gathered the ribbons in his firm hand, Ion reined in his team, with a quick jerk.

"Ah-h my man! Not so close, another time!"

A huge Gaul, with face blanched with fright, had run athwart Ion's pole-cart. He had escaped being grazed by a hair's breadth. As the Gaul flung himself against the wall, gasping his relief, two hetæræ, whose litter-carriers were waiting for a chance to cross the crowded thoroughfare, laughed upwards their scorn of big men's fright.

To one of the girls Ion sent a long admiring look. For a full instant the four young orbs were interlocked.

What a lovely creature! How well she knew how to lie in a litter! What provocative grace! Her draperies caressed her shape, every outline was as clearly defined as were the best sculptors' chiselled marble perfections. She was surely that Ianthe everyone was talking of — come fresh from Corinth. Ion decided to hang a garland on the new beauty's door at the very first opportunity.

Then — the quick thought came, that other — that loveliest of all Corinthians — who in the name of all the graces could she be? And, of all amazing mysteries — how came his father to be in her company? That his father should have any secret to withhold was in itself, a matter for amazed disgust. Yet — yet surely there must be some natural — some quite simple explanation of the occurrence.

"Let me try to remember — what did he say about meeting some one — a Corinthian — at Phalerum? Was it not Nirias?" Ion drew in his roadsters with such a nervous grasp that the animals reared — but the mystery was solved. As he quieted his steeds, Ion's face was radiant with mirth. "Ah-h father — father — now I know why you were so indifferent — why it was a matter of slight importance as to whether we met at the theatre or not —" and as Ion thought on the picture of his parent's discomfiture, when he found his little ruse had not worked, Ion laughed outright.

"How simple are our fathers! To think that in Athens such a beauty as she could have come within our walls, and that two old men could have kept her hidden!"

With such light-hearted thoughts as companion, the drive down to the Port was short. The sea breezes each instant were blowing fresher and fresher. Glints of intensest blue showed the Ægean growing nearer, at every onward step. The throng of passers-by, of carts and waggons, of mules, heavily laden, grew thicker, denser. Ion slackened his speed. All his eyes and skill now were needed to guide his steeds in safety through the packed Piræan thoroughfares.

He did not enter the inner city, he turned to the left, to gain the western slope of Munychia hill.

Crates' house stood on the hill overlooking the smaller Piræan harbour of Zea. Its wide porch faced thus Athens and the grand sweep of plain and mountain range. The tiny harbour, below the Piræan promontory, was set, like a blue jewel, in among its rim of yellow sands and green fields. The turquoise waters were now black with ships. Packed like eels within the tiny harbour, lay Athens' war triremes. Swarming over deck sides and the topaz beach were hundreds of ship carpenters, of slaves, of practised oarsmen in charge of their ships, and of officers exercising their crews. Their shouts and curses were carried upwards to Crates' porch, in the still, clear Attic air.

As Ion swept up the incline that led to his father's fine house, whose dimensions were in such marked contrast to the mean Athenian dwellings, his eye, as it took in the beauty and splendour of the scene, gleamed with delight. Never had the grandeur of the mountains, riding northward;—never had the incomparable glory of the Acropolis;—never had Athens, thus crowned with its temples and gods,—never had the setting of the city that all but ruled the world so impressed him with a sense of its magnificence.

With his quick Greek impulse to let the last emotion seem the one feeling worthy of expression, Ion, as he leapt from the cart, threw his reins to his groom, and rushed, to fling his arms about his father, who stood, awaiting him on the porch, as he cried out—

"O, father! how glorious it all is — and why should one live in dirty Athens, when here there is all this — and

this — and this?" And Ion swept his hand about to include the whole great prospect.

Crates smiled, indulgently. He kissed Ion, even a little more lovingly. "Dearest boy — who ever knew one who dwelt in Athens to desert Athens for despised Piræus?"

Crates, with his eyes rivetted on his Ion's glowing features — scanning each perfection as though he were a lover — asked, gently: "And what news — dear boy?"

Ion returned his father's loving looks, as he collected his thoughts. He would first talk of indifferent matters, before telling him of Pollux's misfortune.

"Well, father, all Athens is fighting Sicily!" he said, as the two now entered the wide peristyle. Still they kept their arms circled about the others' shoulders. Of the same height, their faces were on a level.

Crates stopped, abruptly; his powerful countenance flushed, with sudden heat.

"What ignorance! What folly—and worse! And this is Athens' adored Alcibiades, who proposes to govern Athens? He to lead our fleet into such adventures as this! Let me tell you, Ion," Crates leaned across his shoulder," if indeed Alcibiades persuades Athens to undertake any such disastrous campaign—it will be the awful beginning of a terrible end!" Crates spoke with such intensity of conviction and sorrowful fulness of feeling, even Ion felt himself shaken.

"That is precisely what Socrates says," Ion said, after a cautious pause. He had taken time to sweep his hand-kerchief across his lips to gain perfect control — for Ion made it a point never quarrel with his father over their differences in politics.

"Ah-h, the only sensible remark I ever heard of his making," grumbled Crates."

"What a good hater you are, dear man," laughed Ion.

With a luxurious motion, he flung himself upon a low couch. The two had now entered the pastas, a large room, filled with light.

Crates' couch and Ion's both faced the door — one purposely widened to admit as much of the perfume and verdure entering into the room as was possible. Beyond — through the slits of the poplar leaves, and beyond the wider network of the elms, the willows and the tamarisks, the waters of the tiny harbour dimpled and glittered. As the two men settled themselves among their cushions, faces and forms showed the difference a single generation may bring about.

Ion's graceful figure lay with the ease of a fine animal at rest. Every muscle was in training, and therefore perfectly controlled. Where his tunic showed any portion of the nude form, the lines were a delight to the eye. The skin was brown and firm. The face was fair, with the delicacy of feature he held from his mother and her higherborn race. The refinements of Ion's life and thought, and his larger experience of the polite world had given to the young man's whole bearing, face, and figure that note of a finished completeness the greater sculptors had imitated and captured, in their presentment of the more ideal types.

Beside this sleek, blooming perfection of manhood, Crates' rugged form and lined face seemed doubly rough and uncouth. All the hardships of a long and ardous life were written in his passion-worked features and in that close network of wrinkles.

The crown of his successful career was this dear Ion.

As he now scanned the beautiful face and the perfect outlines, Crates heaved a deep sigh of gratified content. Few fathers could thus behold, in living forces, success thus crowned.

Ion was watching Crates with an amused smile. He

would leave the bad news till the very last — till the time came for the guests to come down from Athens — then his father would have the less time to mourn. Meanwhile he would put the question — he must know all there was to be learned about the "Wonder" before the inquisitive Glaucus came.

"By the way, father, shall you go this year to Corinth, as usual — on your way to the Games, or do you go direct from here, by sea?"

"Oh-h, I go to Nirias, as I always do," Crates replied, unsuspectly.

"His wife is dead I hear," Ion said, dryly.

Crates nodded. "A year since. But he has replaced her." Crates' voice had a touch of scorn in it.

Ion lifted his brows, but he managed to keep his face unmoved.

"Already? He must have mourned her deeply!" Ion laughed — middle-aged passions amused him.

"His grief must indeed have been profound. Her successor is or was — for he freed her — a slave. She is a great beauty — hem — and has many talents, I hear" and Crates looked the picture of innocence, as he sent his eyes adrift, over the sunlit plain.

Ion gave his father a look of admiration—he had never before seen him play a part with greater finish. Then he found the scene too rich in mirth—he really must have his revenge.

"Hem — did I not hear something of your being in the company of two elderly men, and with you was there not a girl of amazing lovliness? Father, father! at your age — to be seen in the society of hetæræ! — and never to breath a word!" and in his delight at seeing his father's sudden start of affright — his crimson face, his hands feverishly working — Ion fairly howled with joy.

His laughter was soon checked, however, for the crunching of wheels on the carriage road brought both men to a startled upright.

"Your friends," said Crates, with a look of immense relief.

But Ion had caught his arm, and there was a look in the lifted eyes that had an arresting alarm. Crates bent over his son. "What is it, my son?"

"Before you go forth to meet them, I must tell you some bad news."

"Out with it, don't torture me!" Crates cried, his voice roughened to the peasant tone to which it reverted in moments of passion.

Then Ion told him.

Crates bore the dreadful news better than Ion could have hoped.

Great merchants become great only by meeting disaster with unflinching front. Never Ion had seen his father straighten himself to as proud an upright, never had he seen his experienced merchantile faculties working as quickly, as ingeniously. Ion felt a child before these trained forces—before this will of iron, that rose to meet the emergency with such proud assurance.

"You must go, and at once, to the farm — when had you thought of starting? and begin the training of a fresh stallion at once — and, if necessary, have that trainer we saw last year at Delphi — send for him, we must leave nothing to chance!" and though Crates spoke with passion-wrought intensity, Ion felt, as never before his father's power of self-command and of his power to command others.

"Hush-h, I hear them already, in the vestibule," whispered Crates, huskily, as he helped Ion to a quick upright.

Both hurried down the peristyle to greet the group of young men who were already in the hands of the slaves, at

the small room opening into the vestibule. As his father joined the gay group, Ion was secretly pleased to see that Crates was entirely at his ease. It was the first time Ion had asked these young aristocrats to his father's house. He had feared both their ridicule of his Piræan parent, and their scorn of Crates' simple manners.

Crates greeted his guests with perfect courtesy. Conscious though he was that the very poorest of them considered it a condescension to have come at all, Crates' native dignity stood him in good stead. He was neither effusively cordial nor was he lacking in hospitable ardour.

Hosts and guests strolled, at first, in groups of twos and threes, about the shaded court. There were all Crates' famous statues to be examined.

These excited much enthusiasm. Glaucus forgot to lisp, as he stood before the tiny Apollo; Ariston's expressive face shone with joy, as he asked Crates question after question, as to just where he heard of as perfect a work of art, and to assure the pleased merchant that, of all the smaller statues Phidias had left, none he had ever seen surpassed this truly divine Apollo.

Such agreeable compliments put every one at their ease. The tour of the peristyle was made to further appreciative, critical praise. Statues, paintings, and tapestries were passed in review. A brilliant picture the sauntering groups made, as the young men trailed their sandalled feet, the gold and silver thongs emitting gleams of light, the bared legs and arms showing the flexible muscles moving freely beneath the skin, and the animated, spirited Athenian faces aglow with the pleasure of confronting rare works of art.

Timoleon walked beside Ion. Suddenly, he turned to him, as though the thought had just struck him.

"By-the-way, Ion, I believe — if my eyes saw true — that both Alcibiades and Socrates are on their way thither. We

passed them close to the theatre. They were in such deep talk, they neither saw us nor did they hear our greeting. But I feel almost sure they are bent on bringing you, Sir, their company."

It would not have been Timoleon had not his eyes twinkled with secret malice. He looked with all his might, from father to son. He hoped to discern in one if not both, some evidence of annoyance.

Crates' face gave Timoleon the surprise of complete mastery of his feeling. One might have thought the information brought him entire satisfaction. For he cried out, as he led the way to the vestibule and onwards, to the open porch.

—"Then if such distinguished guests be indeed come to honour us, I must go forth to meet them." And he pushed his way quickly to the very edge of the porch.

Ion shot a glance of triumph at Timoleon. His father might be a ship-merchant and low-born, but at least his manners were equal, in courtesy and distinction, to those of any Athenian noble.

From the porch the waiting group discerned the figures of two pedestrians. The sun was pouring its noon rays on the two bared heads. The moving shapes were walking with the slow, halting steps of those in deep talk. Both faces were bent groundwards. The stouter, more slovenly-gaited figure now stopped to make an eloquent, impassioned gesture, now resumed its progress to move on — still talking.

"Ten drachmæ to an obol Socrates is telling Alcibiades his Voice has spoken," cried out Glaucus, with irreverent gayety.

"Done," responded Timoleon. "I bet he is still discoursing about 'how best to manage wives.'"

A general laugh greeted Timoleon's witticism. Then the group waited, in silence. The slow-moving pair were now drifting upwards. Crates' welcome was perfect. No one would have suspected the illustrious visitors were uninvited guests — and that neither of them were favourites of the clever Piræan. He himself led them to the retiring room; he ordered a fresh festival robe for Socrates, and implored Alcibiades to refresh himself with a bath — or the barber — or both. The feast could be kept waiting.

With Alcibiades' advent came heightened spirits. The great leader was himself in the very best of humour. The long walk had given tonic to his muscles. Socrates — whom he saw now but seldom — had had an inspired moment. Alcibiades felt uncommonly braced — mentally and physically. For nothing gave him such a sense of mental vigour as opposition. Socrates had indeed been telling him all the dangers he foresaw in the Sicilian expedition. The more eloquent he grew, the more determined was Alcibiades to push on with the venture.

He had had no thought of coming to this feast. Neither Ion nor his merchant-father had seemed to him, as yet, of sufficient consequence to remember their existence. But as Socrates had warmed to his subject — as on and on — between the Walls, their path had carried them, Alcibiades suddenly felt the pangs of hunger. The freshening sea breezes told him they were close to the port. He remembered, with an agreeable start, Glaucus and Timoleon had spoken of a breakfast to be given, that very day, at the house of Crates — Ion's father. Surely it was they who had passed — but a moment before — in Glaucus' cart!

The very thing! He and Socrates would push on. He would win that rich Crates to his way of thinking. A Nicias' man—he must be won—and become his—wholly his. Piræan gold, Piræan sailors would be useful—when the Sicilian expedition was ready to sail.

The morning's adventures, indeed, suited Alcibiades, and

to a turn. He was never more simple, natural, gracious. He was all things to Crates—talking art, finance, commerce. He praised Crates' collection of statues with lavish effusion. He actually envied him his most recent acquisition—that tiny Apollo—a truly exquisite little masterpiece, with its life-like expressiveness of feature and its skin as fluid as though of true flesh. Alcibiades admired the view. The sweep of the plain towards Athens was glorious, and novel. From this altitude the Rock assumed a wholly new and more mystical aspect. As for the buildings and temples of the Piræus—he never came to the Port but he felt a sense of pride in its prosperity. Its clever merchants had made it the glory of all Hellas.

Alcibiades' chief and most discriminating praises were reserved for the banqueting room. What hangings! What strange, mysterious weavings and rich colours! Easy to see here the far-reaching grasp of the clever merchant — with his ships in a hundred harbours!

It was at this point Crates' features visibly softened. His Eastern tapestries, on which he had spent a fortune, were his pride. How could one be insensible to such discriminating, critical judgment?

Crates filled Alcibiades' golden cup himself. He ordered in the dancers and flute players earlier than the time named.

The tall bronze candelabræ about the room stood thick as tree trunks in a young forest. Their yellow light diffused a gentle glow on the youthful shapes, now outstretched on the inlaid, cushion-piled couches. Below each guest stood a three-legged table, bearing rythons and gold and silver cups. Naked boys, with garlands of roses, tulips, lilies and narcissi, served delicate Thracian and Chian wines, from deep amphoræ. Their young arms were often bent beneath their weight.

Flute players in delicate-hued tunics, stood in a corner of the room; the piercing sweetness of their music filled the hall, above which the guests' voices rose, as the sea's murmur rises above larks' songs. The scents of the rich viands, of the thick garlands hanging from the tragic to the comic masks, along the walls, above the tapestries; the perfumes scattered ever and anon — over guests and floors — as slaves swept up bones and fragments, after a certain number of courses had been passed; and the fitful, clean-scented seabreezes, sweeping in through the open door, made Crates' noon-day feast a long one.

Socrates was still purring on, persuasively, to Ariston and Agesilaus. They alone — toward the end of the feast — were in a fitting state to answer his merciless unending questions — leading to lengthy if clear demonstrations. Ion lay on Timoleon's shoulder. The two were listening, dreamily, to the flute song. Timoleon was dreaming of fame — of gold!

And Ion was seeing a golden-hued vision. He was mounting the steps of the Temple — at Olympia. The crown of wild olives was shining — lustrous and green — upon the golden table. 'Twas the "Wonder" who held it toward him!

Crates had learned at last, not the secret, but the power of Alcibiades' charm. For he had promised the most irresistible of men to give his son Ion a war-trireme, the finest the shipbuilders could construct, in case the Sicilian invasion ever came off. When he made the promise Alcibiades' kingly head had sunk upon the pillows. He was smiling as though Sicily were already won.

For Crates' Chian wines were of potent strength. And during the festival of Dionysia, 'twas a crime to be sober.

### BOOK II — OLYMPIA

# Chapter X

#### A FATEFUL DECISION

Four months later Maia lay among her cushions, under the recessed porch of Nirias' house. The heat of the night had driven the inmates of the household to seek the cool, on the open terrace. Maia had chosen to have her couch placed within the arcaded porch. At least there she could breathe—whether there was air or no air. Nirias was not at her elbow—he and Crates were seated beyond—their klinai were placed beneath the moon's warm light.

The gardens, terraces, and the colonnades — so built as to give shade, at any hour; the cooling fountains, the deep green bowers, and the over-decorated house — all these lay, like a city within a city, on the mighty knees of the Acro-Corinthus.

Like Corinth itself, and the outlying world of sea and mountain, the great house, amid its gardens, lay magicsmitten. The whole world was turned to softened gold.

Yet Maia, upon her silken pillows, and beneath her rare statues, knew herself to be among the most miserable of mortals. The surprises of her fate had begun for her after the journey to Athens.

Athens' keen-sighted, beauty-loving eyes had been Nirias' awakening.

Those glad, gratified shouts of "The Incomparable" "The Corinthian Wonder!" "Aphrodite's very self!" how

they had rung in the wool-merchant's ears! Their true meaning had been most mistakenly explained to him by Manes.

These cries, that had maddened Maia to wild unrest for fresh hearing of such rapture-awakening shouts, in Nirias' darker chambered soul had loosed the demons of distrust.

If the mere sight of Maia, in a foreign city, Nirias had argued, with the lover's irresistible, convincing logic, could provoke such amazing, such universal homage, clearly he who was lucky enough to have discovered such a paragon, must look well to security of possession. Such a masterpiece of perfection, like a costly statue, must be carefully housed and hidden.

Nirias, therefore, took to the business of wall-building. The splendid house to which he had brought Maia had walls sufficiently high to lull even the most jealous of lover's fears. It was in the erection of the more invisible walls to protect his divinity, that gave the richest man in Corinth sleepless nights.

Nirias had changed his whole life. Did Maia plead for a change, Nirias promptly developed a quick illness. His pride in banquets was gone: who knew when some younger friend might not rob him of his treasure? Did Maia find a friend among the rare, elderly "companions" who came to Nirias' solemn feasts, Nirias' suspicions made pleasant intercourse impossible. In every embroidered chiton his jealousy scented a hidden love-token: in the verses Maia sang to some poet-friend, a message to an unknown lover. Walls higher than those that encircled Corinth, or any house within Corinth's forty-stadia circlet was an old man's jealousy.

"The sentinels of argus-eyed suspicion," Maia said, and not once, but a thousand times, in her bitter moods, "such sentinels out-pace all the watchers on the city's heights!"

And Maia — what held her captive to this life she had grown to loathe?

It was neither Nirias' great house, nor his avenues of trees and costly statues; nor the wealth with which, in jewels and splendid raiment, he wooed her daily, thicker than the golden shower through which Jupiter had won yielding Dange.

Mere gold could not tempt Maia. It was none of these that held her fast. As she knew full well, beyond the gate all Corinth — all Athens would woo her thus. Dozens of lovers, old and young, with hands ready to shower as pattering a golden rain as Nirias could fling, awaited such as she with eager, lustful eyes. Hellas was rich in rich lovers. Maia knew the world and her city. Yet neither her knowledge, nor her wit, nor her now unused talents, could free her. She was bound, she was shackled by a something within that would not let her go. The iron sense of gratitude, of duty held her fast.

Aye — duty! Slave though she had been; and slave to a chorus-master; mistress though she was now, and to a man old enough to be her father; yet was Maia's soul greater, more potent to command and shape her fate than all outward circumstance. The fetters that bound her fast were forged of the spiritual forces. The something divine in Maia would not let her be false to the singing voices, that rang their clarion-tongued chorus within.

Nirias had freed her; Nirias loved her; Nirias, now aging fast, was a sick man; and, for all the multitude of his slaves and possessions, he was alone in his great house.

This daily prayer of Nirias to the woman he had grown to worship, for common human helpfulness, for sympathy, for companionship, this prayer it was, unconscious, inaudible, that was as fire to incense. Maia's soul, now touched, and for the first time by the flame of the mighty liberator

— offered up its sacrificial fragrance. Had she but known its source, this puissant instinct of self-sacrifice might have been less difficult to obey. Long lines of Athenian soldiers, generals, and admirals had listened to the same still small voice. When duty, when country called, they had rushed to death as to a banquet. Heroic mothers and wives, in Athens' greater days, had steadied trembling hands to buckle shields on shapely frames that would return upon the sculptured discs, rigid and all ivory white. Maia, in her turn, was feeling the iron hand of fateful inheritance.

In Nirias' worst attacks of illness Maia proved the strength of the tie of gratitude that bound her to him. It was in the dulled round of their daily life—in the dreary waste of days, unstirred by pleasure or the hope of change, that Maia proved, in turn, the mortal part of her was still in violence—ungoverned, rebellious, straining at its leash,

Instead of impassioned outburst, Maia now turned, restlessly upon her couch. She would read, she would try to stifle thought by listening to the music of some poet's verse.

As though he divined her wish, Mago, her favorite slave, bent low. Taking a certain roll from the case standing directly below the klinai, he handed her the scroll.

Maia smiled. It was the very poet, the very verse she had wished to read. The Persian really must have double sight!

Below her breath, she began, presently, to half chant half sing the lines.

The scroll dropped from her hand.

Ah — the bliss-evoking words! At least this reading about life and love was better than the dull, brutal-witted acceptance of her lot. With Sappho, with Alcæus, with Simonides,— she could look through her prison bars, she could see Heaven shining beyond. The poets breathed hope. As surely — life — the mere act of living brought change.

Some day — in some way — the "happy he who sees thee" would appear.

Smiling at the mere rapture the vision evoked, Maia lifted her mirror. The tiny miracle of the goldsmith's art—with its frame of Cupids and arm-entwined Graces—this her disc of satiny bronze sent back the picture she knew she should find. Yes "Minerva's hands" were indeed no shapelier, no whiter; the jewels of her chiton rose and fell above "the breasts divine;" the ankles, shining fair as tinted roses, lay below the close, embroidered hem. Slowly she drew the mirror, now upward, now downward, with loving satisfaction, along the full length of her perfect shape. As she scanned each outline of the moulded form, and knew it all unwon, Maia's mood changed.

With passionate sense of defeat, of desperation, Maia crashed the mirror upon the floor.

"Aye! better blows and curses! — better endless toil and such weariness as made one stumble — drunk with overwork — to bed, than such a life as this!" she burst forth, as the mirror rang upon the concrete.

"Hush-h Lady!—the slaves listen," whispered Mago. His voice was in her ear. He had bent, as though merely to recover the dropped bronze disc.

Maia lifted her head. Impatiently she turned her eyes, backwards, to where the fan-wielders stood. Hands and arms motionless now — with eager, glistening eyes the faces were bent forwards. The air about her, Maia noted, was, indeed, suddenly stifling.

Maia's cry rang out with stinging accents.

"Don't drop your fan — you beasts! How dare you? I'll have you both soundly thrashed — you lazy hounds, if you fail to stir the air with a better will!"

The slaves started, as though they already felt the prick of the threatened lash. The creak of the great fans was

once again the one rythmical persistent motion in the night's many-tongued voice. The mistress's threat was no idle one, as both knew well.

At the sound of Maia's angry threat, Nirias' voice had suddenly stopped its droning. Then he called out through the golden air: "Maia, beloved," he quavered. His tones broke with the tremor of a fatigued instrument "Is aught the matter? Is the heat too much for thee? Wilt thou have the sherbet freshly iced?"

In spite of the heat, Maia shivered. That one word "beloved" in those broken, tremulous tones — what a hideous mockery! Even as the slaves behind her had seemed to hear the whistle of the lash, she too must answer to the stroke of her whip.

"No-o" she finally ejaculated. "I praise your remark O Nirias — but I am not thirsty." Unable to hold in the full measure of her irritation, she snapped forth —"I am no man — I cannot be always drinking."

Nirias laughed — but not so loud as Crates. What a spirited creature it was!" the latter thought. He might disapprove of Maia's effect on his friend, but, secretly, he confessed his admiration. He bent his mind once more to listen, in patience, to Nirias' unending recital of his ailments.

"Yes—it was indeed a pity you could not have stopped longer. Those cures—"he went on, with kindly courtesy. Crates, saying this in an absent tone of voice, wondered how much longer Nirias could go on talking about doctors and diseases.

"Cures — cures!" Nirias now cried out, in his most querulous, agitated tone, as he lifted his head from his cushions. "O dear man — what have I not tried? I've dragged myself and Maia — the dear creature — from temple to temple. I've had hundreds of priests pray for me,

I've soaked in hot and cold baths — even the Castilian spring failed to work its promised miracle. I've bribed the very gods — and yet here am I — just where I was three months ago!" And Nirias, with despairing groan flung himself anew upon his pillows.

Presently he lifted his head. A freshened tone rang out. "Yet—O Crates—I am bound to except one great cure. At Epidaurus the healing god still works great miracles at his shrine!" Nirias now bent forward eagerly, with passionate fervour. Maia could see his hands working feverishly in the golden light. He was, indeed, all eagerness now. Epidaurus was his last craze—his one strong-hold left amid the ruins of his medicinal belief. "Crates, I tell thee the god is every inch a god. Such wonders as he performs! The lame, after seeing him—in the vision—walk; the dumb speak; the paralyzed leave the stones they are able to carry, after their cure—behind them—as proof."

"Yes! Yes!" impatiently interrupted Crates. A practical man, he had somewhat outgrown his belief in miracles. He had known—in his time—too many priests. "I've heard the tales. But surely, Nirias, you do not swallow that absurdity about the Temple dogs licking sight into blind eyes?"

"Man alive—but I've verified the truth of the miracle!" almost screamed Nirias, his excitement working him into a sort of frenzy. To prove to sceptics the healing powers of his newest god was his latest—almost his sole emotional ecstacy. "The very day after that famous vision—after the lad had slept in the hall—and the sacred dog had licked his eyelids—the boy opened his eyes and saw—as clearly as you or I. Why—I talked with him, man—did I not, Maia?" Nirias called backwards, excitedly, hoping to win corrobative testimony from Maia.

"You had never laid eyes upon the boy before that," Maia's cool voice answered through the still air. "Not uptil the moment when his eyes were, indeed, as good as any one's—"

Nirias sank among his pillows, groaning as he sank. "Alas! — Maia is also a sceptic. She knows all the good the dear god has done me — yet, like Ambrosia of Athens who, before her cure, was also a scoffer —"

"Well, I only hope Ambrosia's new eye is as pretty as the votive silver pig she hung alongside of the picture of her restored organ. I never saw a prettier pig!" laughed Maia, the memories of her Epidaurian experiences swarming, amusingly before her. She went on, sending her lovely voice into the still night. Its tones rang out, shaken by mirth. "What Nirias has not told you, O Crates! is the latest miraculous cure—the new salve—for baldness," Maia somewhat cruelly went on to say.

"Oh-h — Maia love!" implored Nirias.

"Heræus of Mytelene," Maia's voice bubbled on, "having lost his hair, went up to the hall, praying for help. The god — in the same old vision — annointed his head — and behold! the next day — his hair stood out on all sides — a crop thicker than his beard. Ah ha!"

Even Nirias could not help echoing Maia's melodious laughter. It was long since he had heard it ring with as full and hearty a note.

"Well—and did you try this marvellous salve on—" Crates' eyes, still small with the laughter that shook him, covered his old friend's head—"on Nirias?"

"Ah indeed, and we did! — and most thoroughly — in the same dear old vision. But, later — without heavenly assistance — in broad daylight — and, since leaving the temple — Mago and even I — have each one and all — we've tried our

### 102:... ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

strength and the salve — on the dear bald spots — and see! — how grandly they shine now — as the moon strikes! Clear as silver discs!"

There was a general laugh. Even the fans shook, the slaves' eyes having turned to note their master's hairless crown.

Nirias joined in the laughter. But he managed, with skilful tact, to change the subject, and quickly.

"Speaking of salves — that reminds me. If Pollux should go lame again I have a tonic in a hundred —"

Crates started. He was touched on his tenderest point. Maia laughed anew to see how he had straightened, indignantly, to quick upright, how passion-worked was his strong-featured face.

"Pollux going lame again! Why, dear old man, he is now the leader of the team — Ion writes —"

"Ion" "The Quadrega" "Pollux." Oh, Ion! Ion! Ion! how tiresome!" Maia closed her eyes. Crates was as wearisome, when he went on about his paragon of a son as was Nirias when he talked about miracles. One would think this Ion a veritable Apollo, curls, lvre, beauty, and all. Doubtless he would turn out to be as plain as Silenus. Crates, for a clever man, he also, could be stupid enough. He had come solely to Corinth, apparently, to talk about Pollux's miraculous straight legs, the wonders of the stallion's cure — the speed of the animal — and how fine Ion's marvel of a jockey had trained down - without losing strength! Never had Olympia seen such a "four!" Never before had such a car been sent to the Hippodrome! Never before were groom and horses in such close harmony of obedence and mastery! Never this - never that - it was as boresome a tale as Nirias' diseases!

With a groan, Maia flung herself, with passionate impatience against her pillows.

Corinth's deep, melodious voice now filled the midnight.

Maia caught snatches of song and laughter wafted up from the house below their own. Stirring notes of flute and trumpet rang out; a rush of quickened motion — of swirling draperies. Ah! there was dancing as well! Their nearest neighbour was giving a banquet. The shrilly sweet notes of a Phrygian flute sent Maia's nerves to responsive quivering.

The music suddenly stopped. A chorus of applause filled the silence. Then, nearer still from the other side of the tall walls—came a bubble of soft-cooing laughter;—next a man's tones, deep, eager-voiced—then a long silence. One could almost hear the hot pulses beating. A cry and confused voices—the couple had been stopped by others. "Come! no loitering! On! we must lose no time—the night is all too short!" the voices chorused. The gay clamour grew faint and ever fainter, and was lost, like a chorus winding through a city's streets.

Aphrodite's priestesses were leading their lovers up the steep hillside. The green airy bowers aloft, on Acro-Corinthus, would indeed soon be full.

Maia grew more and more restless. Yet there was not even a mirror to send headlong, to ease her violence! Once more she moaned —

"At least—even with Manes—slave though I was—I saw life! I was part of a living, breathing, quickened world!" Maia felt the sob rising in her throat. "Ah! me miserable! Will it ever end? Shall I have to go on—year after year—listening to old men's talk—to Nirias' feeble jokes?"

And Crates' and Nirias' voices droned on.

Like an antiphonal, Maia's wretchedness and misery rang up its wailing tones, to be answered by the sound of such dull dreary talk as "how, unless a physician has had Dorian training — I find —"

Maia closed her eyes. Would sleep release her from the

torment of this wild unrest — this unsupportable discontent?

For long it seemed to her, the city's festival notes rang on, the flutes from the near banquet sounded gay and ever gayer strains—when, as though a god, out of the warm skies, had alighted, to touch her dead soul to quick life, Maia felt her nerves quiver, her ears throb, her hands chilled.

Crates' tones had been the miracle worker. His powerful voice was raised. Urging, pleading, indignant, his words came clear — distinct —

"Really Nirias — I hold it to be unfriendly! I never dreamed of such desertion! Not to see Ion run — not to be there to support me — in such an hour! Your absence will rob the victory of half its rapture. Indeed — believe me — this is an unlooked-for trial!"

Never had Maia heard Crates speak as passionately. For Crates was indeed experiencing a severe trial. He was being touched in a vital spot. Nirias must, indeed, be made to go! For long years he, Crates, had gone to Olympia, for nothing, as guest aboard Nirias' ships.

Maia caught her breath. Suppose Nirias should actually be worked upon by so much display of feeling? Suppose him to yield — and go — as far as Olympia! What gift of the gods could be as blessed? Maia felt her head fairly reel at the thought. To be alone — to be left free in this great house — in the gardens — in Corinth — the very thought of such happiness turned Maia's soul faint with joy. She seemed to be breathing, already, the elastic air of liberty.

Then all hope died out. The golden night was suddenly o'ershadowed. For Nirias was answering — Oh, she could have foretold his hateful answer! He was voicing it in his most purring tones.

"For no other man alive would I go to the lengths I would for thee — my life-long friend. Such friendship as

ours is a holy thing. No sacrifice is too great to ask—to be given. But—hem! My health—dear Crates—as you must see—I am not what I was. I confess the journey appalls me. And at Olympia itself—one needs strong knees and a stout back."

"Pooh! Pooh!" flouted Crates. "You are hipped, Nirias, between your quacks and your Æsculapian cures you have disease on the brain."

As though she had received a sign from heaven, Maia noiselessly slipped from her couch. Crates' courage — his daring to flout thus his friend's folly — the magnetism of his strength gave Maia the fleet wings of inspiration.

Even as she drifted down the garden paths, she did not omit to lift up her soul in prayer. It was a critical—it might prove the turning moment in her fate. She needed the god's help. "Dear Hermes," she whispered quickly, desperately, "teach me the right words—give me wisdom—and thy altars shall be heaped with offerings."

The two men paused abruptly in their talk. The suddenness of Maia's appearance startled them. The delight her fairness evoked kept them breathless. Even Crates felt his slow pulses stirred. The moon's light lent a something celestial to this creature of roses and gold, who stood thus before them — to this girl whose snows seemed tracked with fire. Even as Maia's embroidered chiton, at her least motion, shed stars of light — so did her radiant eyes seem to emit living flames. Never had Crates felt the girl's beauty as now — his quickened Athenian eyes bent in homage before her. He felt his very breath indrawn. She was indeed a creature for worship. Luckily Ion —

Before he could finish the thought — Maia had moved. She was crouching at Nirias' couch. She was wooing him to yield, with caressing fingers.

"Crates indeed speaks golden truth - dear Nirias. We

are both to blame. You are grown womanish and I foolish—with too much coddling."

"Is that your real opinion, my Maia?" asked Nirias, in a plaintive voice. But Maia's nearness was too sweet! How feel even sadness with that perfect face bending low? "How beautiful thou art — beloved! The moon's light makes thee glorious! Is she not a wonder, Crates? Ah-h — yes — sweet — fan my forehead — brush the loose hair."

Maia stopped fanning on the instant. Of all moments to have him turn lover! She would administer a tonic. A good wholesome dose of truth would bring him to his senses. What she had never dared to say — to urge — now came easily to her lips.

"Indeed — O Nirias — it is action — a life among men — and in the world you most need, and not more coddling. Indeed, dear Nirias, I am troubled about you. You are growing as thin as a shade — you who used to be as fat as a dopiac eel. And this heat is killing — you need a change — "Inwardly Maia was breathing her quick, hot prayer — "Help me, O Hermes — send me the right words — that I may work the miracle."

Hermes was in a mood to live up to his reputation, apparently. Not only did he inspire Maia with the best possible words, to work the fright she meant should convulse Nirias, but at the very same moment the cleverest of the gods got Æolus to help him.

Up from the gulf there suddenly swept a fresh, breathgiving breeze. The cooling salt of the sea was on its lip. It swept the figures, and into the breathless night, as though it were a living presence.

Nirias lifted his heavy head. He smiled, almost as gaily as Maia, who sprang to her feet.

"Ah-h the breeze! the breeze!" she cried out joyously, as she clapped glad hands. "It has come at last! The

gulf sends its healing! We'll all be alive once more—in no time. Ah—Nirias dear—if you were really kind you would take us—aye—even me—out upon the sea! Here's Crates—he's waiting for a ship—and you have a dozen—lying at anchor. Better than all the doctors and cures—would be a sea voyage. See—already you have a colour in your cheeks!"

Maia swept her cool, caressing fingers along the faded yellows of Nirias' shrunken skin. But Nirias, with eyes aflame, had started to his feet. He swept Maia aside. All his fears, suspicions — the very demons of jealousy were let loose. Why did Maia urge this journey? Whom did she wish to see — to meet? Did she imagine for a single instant she might be left alone — in Corinth? What did Crates intend by so much urging? Were he and Maia in conspiracy?

Paling, flushing, with hands shaken by the violence of his feeling, Nirias, as he strode with quick, agitated step, up and down his scented terrace presented the spectacle, to the clever Piræan who watched him with amused, amazed eyes, the latter had never expected to behold. But no man may be said to know another, truly, until he has seen him wrought upon by love's distemper.

Maia, being used to such exhibitions, sat herself down upon the vacant klinai: she calmly bared her throat to the breeze. When Nirias' fit of anger was gone, she might find better argument.

Hermes, however, was working silently, but surely. He winged an inspiration to Crates.

"Come—calm thyself—O Nirias," Crates cried out, suddenly to his friend. "Maia is neither to be left—unguarded, in wicked Corinth—nor yet is she to wander upon the high seas—and we upon the Altis. I have thought of a plan."

108

Nirias eyed his friend suspiciously. But he came to a rest upon his couch. Crates, as he unfolded his plan, continued to gaze in amazement at his elderly friend's suddenly swollen features — his bulging eyes, his distended cheeks, and the streaks of purple on his yellowing skin.

Crates felt the need of all his tact. With Nirias' idle ships in Corinthian ports, there was all the more need of persuasive eloquence.

Why not take Maia with them? On the voyage—there could be nothing out of the way, in her being of the party. Once at the Elean Port—matters could be easily arranged. Since no women must go to the Sacred City—women, and in plenty—as every one knew—went elsewhere. The banks of the Alpheios were lined with them.

"Yes — with Hetæræ"— testily broke in Nirias.

"Surely you would not have Maia exposed to —"

"No—no" was Crates' suave reply. "It is to meet just that objectionable feature that I am about to propose to you the following. In Pisa," he went on, "there are still a few houses and gardens left—some of the inhabitants crept back, and rebuilt their homes, after the conquest. A few farmers still till the land. Once, years ago, when I was taken ill—from the bad water at Olympia—you know that water—Nirias—I went up to one of these farms. The farmers's wife was a kindly soul. They have grown richer since then—their house is a pleasant one.

"It is there I propose we place Maia. She will be well looked after. And Pisa is but six stadia from Olympia—you can see her daily—Nirias—if you choose." Crates folded his hands before him, in full satisfaction. The plan, as he had unfolded it, had seemed even more feasible that when he had thought it out.

Both faces were lifted towards him. Nirias' look of un-

certainty was replaced by an eager, by an almost joyous expression. If such a thing were really possible — if Maia could indeed, be safely taken along — could be securely housed and guarded — where his jealousy could outwatch any daring approach to the fair citadel of her beauty — Aye! aye!— the place might, indeed, be a good one! Could it be successfully worked he, Nirias — ill, weak though he was — could be — might be one among the blessed throng of pilgrims — actually once again might behold the Sacred City! The very thought made him quiver with rapture. He turned to Maia.

"And — and what do you say — dear Maia? Is the plan a good one? Would it please you to go on this journey — to see the world a bit?"

All the radiance of a sudden — an unimaginable joy was irradiating Maia's face. With an impetuous ardour she believed was among her lost possessions — so unevoked had been rapture these long months — Maia moved swiftly forward,— she flung her arms about Nirias' neck.

"Dear — dear Nirias! It is you who are good! To be even within six stadia of Olympia — what Greek would not sell his soul for such a hope?" Maia bent forward — still nearer — she pressed her lips upon the shining bald space she had mocked but awhile before.

"And now," she cried joyously, as she came to an upright, a new elasticity of spirit permeating her whole frame, "now — while you and Crates discuss further plans, concerning the journey, I'll talk with Mago of household matters. For there is no time to lose."

The eyes of the two men followed the bright grace of Maia's floating draperies, as she disappeared within the house porch. Brilliantly lighted as was the scene, both the terrace and the outer world seemed suddenly to have lost their true animating spirit. Maia's charm had the quality

of suffusing the very atmosphere — wherever she might be. The vibration of her magnetism was still felt — after she had departed.

"A rare creature—as rare as she is beautiful," cried Crates—with enthusiasm, half unconsciously. Inwardly he was thanking the fates that Olympia and their tent would be six full stadia from Pisa and the farm. Heaven forbid Ion should meet such a paragon! Crates stirred, uneasily. Had he been indiscreet in suggesting the project? Was there a possibility—the most remote—of Ion's chancing upon Maia—hidden away among the hills? Of course not. Absurd was the thought! To what ridiculous fears love for a son could put a man! All the same, the fact of so lovely a creature as Maia being within as short a distance as Pisa must be kept a profound secret. He must warn Nirias.

"Of course — dear friend" Crates attempted to give to his tones a casual note," of course we must keep the matter a profound secret — the slaves —"

"Fear naught. I intend to muzzle the slaves. A word, a hint even — from any one of those we take with us — and torture shall be the punishment of all — upon my return. As for the crew — none shall be allowed to land. A fresh ship can be sent for the return journey."

Nirias' assured tones suddenly gathered in volume. He leant forward — impressively. He looked about him — his cautious eyes searched the silent terarce. "Nearer — dear friend — there is yet another secret that must be kept —"

Crates bent close. He divined the coming words.

"You intend to marry her?" He could breathe the freer, he felt, were the surmise true.

Nirias — to his great relief, gravely nodded his head. "You have divined my intention. I have, indeeed, always

intended to marry her. But—as I think you can well understand, dear friend—it was wise to wait. Her youth, her hard youth, her innocence and her great beauty made me hesitate. I was not sure of her love. But—now—as you may see for yourself—no woman could be fonder! She will make a wife in a thousand!"

Crates answered as all men answer — when self-interest prompts the gilding of a lie.

He eased his inward satisfaction in thanking heaven all old men were not fools. He knew, at least, one who had never been fooled by a woman.

# Chapter XI

#### THE SACRED WAY

THE landing at the Elian port had been accomplished with comparative ease. The "Maia's" clever captain anchored his ship close to the very strip of shore where Nirias' long train, sent overland, awaited them. The litters for Nirias and Maia; the horses for Crates and the mounted escort; the asses, already laden with their heavy packs; and the slaves, making ready to carry the costly votive offerings—the statues with which Crates proposed to celebrate Ion's coming great victory, and Nirias' magnificent gifts by which he meant to impress both men and gods,—this little army of rich men's retinues was finally disentangled from the surrounding crowd. Mago was soon marshalling his forces with military precision.

Crates was immediately surrounded. A group of horsemen, who, apparently, had been on the lookout for the arrival of Nirias' ship, closed in about Crates with a ringing cheer. One of the three riders cried out—"And where is Nirias—that I may thank him for safely delivering you, dear father?"

Maia heard Nirias' nervous answer to what appeared to be courteous greetings, and his quick, agitated whisper to Mago —

"For Heaven's sake, Mago, see that Maia's curtains are drawn and keep them closed, as you value your life!"

Maia, within her stifling litter, laughed softly. "In such a crowd as this, my poor Nirias, jealousy cannot dog every step — and it will be neither Mago's fault nor mine, if wonderful things do not happen!"

The dear god of luck seemed to befriend Maia, at the very outset. No sooner was their train in motion, than a company of Corinthian merchants were greeting Nirias with shouts of delight. Their own slaves had not met them at the landing, and could they join forces with Nirias? The sight of Nirias' distressed expression, his quick terrified orders to Mago, made Maia's laughter again consume her. "Nirias, Nirias!— to what lengths will thy courtesy be stretched! Would I could see thy face, twisted to a smile!" Then, quick as thought, came Maia's command—"Mago, stand beside the litter—but, as you value your life, let go the curtains!"

Mago showed his dark face lit into illumined beauty by the excitements of his duties and the march; he bent over his adored mistress, "Dear lady, I intend the master's carriers shall, presently, be found in the very midst of the Corinthians. Once Nirias begins to tell them of his cures, for he has not seen them lately, he will forget to keep watch."

Maia nodded. She would keep within her curtains until the right moment came. Indeed, she was well content to be screened from view.

How hot it was! The torrid, relentless Olympian heat had come with the sun. The cooling sea breezes had died away. And the dust! It rose up from the packed roadway in rolling clouds that gathered in volume, as they swirled upwards. Trees, shrubs, fields, the few pines and olive trees, as well as all the pilgrim-world were powdered thick with fine white particles.

Yet neither heat nor dust could quench the gay humour of the crowd. Spirited sallies, greetings, joyous shouts, and occasional bursts of song, made a contagious festival spirit, that swept the Sacred Way like a stirring, carrying wave.

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# 114 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

Maia's sentient nature was vibrating in unison to the gay stir and the busy tumult. She was shaken by tremors of excitement. Now she was thrilling at the very thought of being one of the Olympian throng, and the next instant she was darting behind the curtains of her litter, as she caught dozens of strange eyes fixed full upon her. How they stared! Ah-h the ever-old, ever-new ways of men! Not one among these pressing, bold-eyed creatures but had seen women, and by the thousands, and yet each was as eager to behold a new one as though she were the very first!

Maia laughed, as a child might. It amused her to see the dear men pushing, squeezing, struggling for a glimpse of her face. And what a world passed before her litter! How Olympia drew men from every far away land! Maia's soul swelled with pride. There was no country so distant, but had heard of mighty Hellas! From every corner of the dear flat earth, great Zeus had called men to worship him.

Ah-h, she must make the most of every moment of time—of every step taken along the Sacred Way! Once imprisoned in the Pisan farm, with a brutish farmer's wife for companion, and what chance would there be of seeing Olympia or Olympian splendours?"

"Surely I can bribe the woman — I shall bribe first the dear gods, and they will soften the hearts of my gaoler," she whispered to, the mist of her rising hopes.

With a dozen plans coursing through her fertile brain, Maia was oblivious to the discomforts of the Way—to the scorching, fiery heat, that made a dazzle of the white light; to the clouds of dust that enveloped the marching army of pilgrims like a mantle; and to the scant shade afforded by the few olives and pines along the road.

Maia felt her litter, suddenly, brought to a stop. The unexpected motion sent her flying backwards. The curtains were parted. Mago had, apparently, deserted his post.

Maia peered through the slits of the silken draperies. The crowd, she saw, had come to a standstill. Litters, asses, horsemen, slaves and ambassadors' trains were inextricably mixed. Cries, shouts, and curses filled the air. Above the tumult, a single voice rang out.

"If all you dear people will but stay your anger, we'll have this poor fellow's pack refilled in no time."

In a gay note that had the ring of a challenge in it, the speaker cried, "Come, Timoleon! Come Glaucus! off with you — And you," turning to the slaves, "See that no one comes too near."

Even as the young man cried the words, with a light spring he had dismounted. The two gentlemen with him flung themselves from their steeds, with the air of men who were following a leader. With gay laughter, like boys bent upon a frolic, the three young men disappeared from view. The crowd closed in about them.

The pedlar, whose over-swollen pack had burst, causing all the trouble, stood above his friendly helpers. He was an image of impotent woe. Above the chorus of the laughter-shaken crowd, his voice rose up—he was calling to all his hundred gods for succor.

From the dust of the road, the same voice that had controlled the pilgrim horde, now rang out, clear, sweet,—yet with mocking accent —

"Stop that nonsense! You lazy fool, down upon your knees! Do you think the gods are coming from above, on purpose, just to help pick up unguents, and powders and perfumes? Ah-h, you prefer others should work, while you gird yourself up? How about a chaplet and a little wine,

to support you, while we grope here? Some one call a flute boy — to sooth his nerves!"

The crowd yelled with delight. Then came a scramble, more laughter and shouts, and the three young men were fighting their way through the cheering masses.

While the slaves were brushing the dust from the masters' sandals, the tallest, handsomest, of the three — he of the ringing voice — again tossed to the crowd the sort of joke they best relished. Taking from his tunic some long-necked bottles, he cried out, "Here Timoleon — here Glaucus — here's our share of the booty — These are spoils not to be despised —"

The young man handed to each of his friends a tiny, delicately carved flacon. As the others proceeded to dispose of their prizes, stuffing them into their tunics, the bystanders were rocked with the ectasy of their laughter.

It was to the ringing chorus of the melodious Greek voices that the young Athenians made a rush for their steeds, grasped the manes of the mettlesome beasts, and had sprung to their seats with the ease of perfect cavalry training.

The prancing horses were reined in beside Crates.

Maia, whose face was pushed out far beyond the curtains — for her excitement was uncontrollable — when the trio joined Crates, felt her breath fairly taken from her. She had followed every detail of the amusing scene with delighted eyes. The glimpse she had caught of the Athenians, with their unmistakeable air of Attic distinction, had sent the quick blood to her cheeks.

Now that she saw them riding beside Crates, a swift conjecture flashed through her quick mind. Suppose one of them to be the much talked-of Ion? Maia strained her neck outward as far as she dared. The sight of the most beautiful of the trio—he who sat his horse with such

peculiar grace — made her heart beats quicken. She knew herself to be strangely moved.

"If he be really Ion, he is indeed a wonder!"

As she caught a fuller glimpse of horse and rider, Maia decided this gentleman could never be Ion—this man whose every line proclaimed the aristocrat. This was no ship-merchant's son! Yet, she reflected, Crates was always talking about Ion's beauty, how Athens delighted in his comeliness, and how the most difficult artists had requested permission to copy his shapely features.

As though her very fate were involved, Maia lifted her hands, as she murmured —

"O turn your horse, dear man, and ride beside Crates — I shall know by the way he looks at thee, whether thou art of a certainty the Apolline Ion — locks and shape and tuneful voice."

As though the young man had heard, he had swept his steed close to Crates, and was saying —

"I had a message from Xenias last night, as I was awaiting your ship. And he says—"

Maia lost the rest. She heard Mago shouting orders, the slaves' frightened replies, and her own body slaves were hurrying to their posts which they had, for a time, deserted that they might lose none of the sport.

Maia's freedom had come to an end. Mago was once more walking close beside her litter.

A deafening scream suddenly rent the air. Curses and shrieks were heard rising above all the noisy tumult of the marching crowd.

"What is it? Is any one hurt, Mago?" Maia asked. Mago's usual solemnity had deserted him. He was laughing as loud as the other slaves.

"'Tis only the pedlar! He seems to think those gentlemen had nimble fingers—"

The pedlar's voice now shrilled forth -

"I am robbed! robbed! and on the Sacred Way! Sacred to all travellers — They have taken the costliest of all my stock! Who'll help me catch the thieves?"

Laughter, so full it seemed to liberate the very spirit of joy, now rang upon the air. The voice presently stopped its gleeful outburst, to call forth—

"Give the rascal some drachmæ, and a kick or two—and let us hurry on, father, for we have lost time with this frolic. Come, dear men, let us try a dash into the fields,—and under the shade of a spreading plane tree have a cup of wine and a few figs."

There was a great clattering of horses' hoofs, a cloud of dust following after, and the party were off.

And so it was Ion!

He had called Crates "father!"

Maia having grasped this fact, sank back among her pillows with a sigh so deep it was almost a sob. "I am glad, glad! Now, somewhere — somehow I shall see him. He is all, and more, than his father said of him."

Even as she spoke, she felt the breath hot upon her lips, and her hands were interlocked, as though she were already gripping some new form of happiness.

Can all life be changed in a moment of time? What strange world was opening before her? Why should this mere sight of a beautiful Athenian, of his form — merely — suddenly flood her whole being with joy? This "wonderful" Ion, as she had mockingly called him, when tired of hearing of his father's praise of him, this first sight of his shape, had set every nerve to quivering. Was it alone his beauty? He was as perfect and complete as a god — that no one could deny. His every motion proclaimed his mastery of every part of his body. And what ripe, rich forces of life in the spirited, yet controlled, activity!

Yet it was rather his voice than his beauty of form, that had stirred to life this new world of feeling. Those melodious accents, that joyous rhythm, that seemed to fairly throb upon the air, to sing —

"Awake! Live to the uttermost! Let us love! Dance!— Let us be glad of our glad lives!"

How the laugh, how every note of the gayly attuned voice rang with the very joy of living!

The rest of the way Maia rode as one in a dream.

For a long period of time, as time is counted in dreamland, Maia watched the motley procession troop past. More pedlars and their packs; bearded Scyths; courtly Persians, magnificent, gleaming with jewels even along the Secred Way; fair-haired Gauls; men from Spain as dark as stained woods, yet glorious-eyed; Egyptians with faces as long and solemn as their ugly gods; philosophers and their train of students; mounted cavalry, dashing past, as though Zeus and his Sacred City were in danger of hostile invasion — while Greeks of every tint and in every sort of costume, proving thus the extent of Greek empire, were inextricably mixed with slaves bent double beneath their loads, with votive statues, laden donkeys, sheep, and butting goats.

All the world on its way to Olympia trudged thus past Maia's litter, and she scarce knew it to be strange.

High above the clamour, suddenly, a manly voice rang out. A familiar Pindaric ode was being sung, and with spirited fervour. One by one, other voices were soon shouting the well known tune. High and strong swelled the ever gathering volume of the song. It swept the Way like a mighty tumultuous chorus.

He who had started the enlivening strains was Ion! Maia would know his voice now, above the loudest-tongued trumpet.

And what had not the music done for the weary crowd! Dust, hunger, even thirst were forgotten. The steps of those near to exhaustion were quickened. The marching multitude, and for the first time, had their steps attuned to true worship.

The song was done, another was called for. Ion was cheered as he gave the opening notes of a Sophoclean Chorus.

The pilgrims marched as they sang. To even barbarian ears the music was divine. For every Greek sang with his heart in his throat, and some wept as they sang. Colonists from far distant lands felt their very souls shaken. Once more, in their ears, the glorious home voices were ringing. Exiles though they were, yet they could sing, also, in perfect unison, so universal was the spread of the Greek orchestral system. The whole Greek world was one.

Before the beginning of the next strophe, Maia heard Ion's glad shout—"The Altis! The Altis! I can see the white walls gleam! Hermes be praised! The City is in full sight!"

The cheer that rent the air crashed upon Maia's ears like the knell of doom. The walls of Olympia once in sight, Mago's orders were imperative. A certain side path was to be watched for; the Pisan hills were to be reached by a circutious route.

Nirias was now close beside the litter. He was struggling to say tender things in a whisper; to terrify Mago with threats should any misadventure happen on the way to Pisa; and to keep Ion at a distance, for he had ridden back to tell Nirias that Crates was awaiting him at a cross-road.

Before turning into a side path, Maia, in attempting to catch sight of Ion, had one swift, enrapturing vision.

At a certain point in the road the crowd, and the pro-

cession of the statues, slipped downwards. The hills opened, they too sloped, with enchanting grace, to form a wide semi-circle. At their feet lay a valley. In the lap of the valley a city was set. Its temples, altars, colonnades, and its walls gleamed with colour. Far as the eye could reach, golden-hued bronzes, tinted statues, and the dazzle of Parian marbles, made a magical blend. As though to light the City with peculiar splendour, Phoebus lent his effective aid. The sun was near to its setting. The slanting rays touched every cornice, every god and goddess-crowded pediment, and every-rounded column and all the population of the statues with their transfiguring glow. The cloud of dust that hung over the City was turned, also, to rosy glory. Incense, rather than dust, did it seem, rising from some celestial city, whose walls were golden girdles.

As she was carried to the west, to gain the narrower side road, Maia heard the mighty clamour of the City grow fainter and fainter. The walls about her now were the cool, green hills. Soon upon her ear there fell the lisping of a flowing river. And her heart died within her. Her imprisonment had begun.

Yet - she had seen - she had looked upon Olympia!

## Chapter XII

### ION AND MAIA

THE very next afternoon Ion stood at the door of his tent. With one hand he screened his eyes — the sun was scorching. With the other he fingered, idly, the jewelled clasp of his tunic.

For the first time since his father's and Nirias' arrival, he felt himself to be free. The two elderly gentlemen, worn out with excitement, were fast asleep. In the inner room, the slaves were on duty: the creak of the fans came with measured beat. Ion felt no sense of fatigue. He longed, however, for a moment of complete solitude, of escape.

For days and weeks Ion had lived in this clogged, heated Olympian atmosphere. Besides the fierce sun, and the proverbial dust, he had breathed for long months, the febrile air of a contestant. The strain, now that the opening of the games drew near, had begun to tell, even on his hardened nerves.

To-day, at least, he must have rest - peace.

"Persia!" he cried out, suddenly, his eyes blinking before the fierce white light, "Tell my father, should he wake, I am gone forth, to the Fair, and beyond. I may be abroad till night-fall—have Xenias await my return. No—you are not needed,—drench that in perfume—and give me my cane," and Ion handed his slave his hand-kerchief, and then grasped the tall cane held out to him.

A moment later, Ion was speeding down, towards the Plain.

The roar and rustle, the shouts and cries of rustling, moving, fighting thousands reached Ion's ear. He caught, above the loud confusion, certain well-defined sounds. There was the sharp smiting of leathern-bound knuckles, on bared flesh; there was the swift, onward rush of runners; there was the metallic ring of the rolling discus; and there were the keen cries of praise, of reprimand, or of encouragement from trainers and onlookers.

Past the polychrome temples, and the multitude thronging the Festal Square Ion hurried onwards. The monologue of philosopher's, airing the latest novelties concerning the soul and the universe;— rhapsodists chanting Homeric verse;— musicians playing on shrill pipes, flutes, and trumpets, and, as he neared the Hippodrome, the sound of horses running, neighing, and the grooms' cries, followed him down to the crowded streets of the Fair.

To all whom he met, he made courteous excuses. He hurried through the bazaar-lined streets. Once he had gained the shores of the Alpheios, in safety, with no one of his many acquaintances or friends, anxious for the latest news from the stables, pulling his mantle, to ask tiresome questions, he could turn Pisa-wards.

Even as he made up his mind just what should be done with his time, the thought of the deep, cool shade in the forest groves, beyond the bridge, the babbling of the quiet river, and a long stretching, on sweet grasses,— the mere thought filled him with delight.

The narrow Pisan streets were as still as a deserted temple. Every male who could walk was crowding the Palestra, or the Stadion, or was walking beneath the scant shade of the plane trees of the Sacred City.

Ah-h - the long sweet silence!

After the dust, the noisy clamour of Olympia, these still Pisan streets were better than the music of shrill-tongued flutes. Homely, rustic sounds alone filled the still air. Some maidens' voices, from enclosed gardens, rose up, clear and soft. It was long since Ion had heard a woman's voice.

How pleasant indeed, the quiet! How odorous the perfumed air! Beneath the shade of the tall trees, Ion walked on and on. Already, he felt amazingly refreshed. His frame seemed re-knit, to new energies. He felt the tingling glow of restored condition.

A house-door suddenly opened. Through the low portal swept two women shapes.

Ion's wide eyes grew wider, and still wider, with wonder. He slowed his step. For one of these shapes recalled Athenian grace — and the robes were of Corinthian splendour.

The elder of the two women wore the common Pisan dress, the short Doric tunic. It was the younger of the two that sent an agreeable quiver of interest and curiosity, through Ion's impressionable frame.

No Pisan this! The stranger's delicate, costly embroideries were swept out of the dust, by a practised hand. Here was the deft touch of city-bred grace. How lovely the full, yet harmonious outlines! The veil, obviously, was worn solely for ornament. It barely covered the high-piled golden crown of tresses. The pink cloud, slightly puffed outwards by the light breeze, resembled the gauzy veil painters delight in, when framing Aphrodite's shape.

Who, in the name of all the graces, could the lovely creature be?

Here was an adventure, and one any man might be proud to follow. Such luck as to meet a Corinthian or an Athenian upon a Pisan highroad, was luck indeed. What a tale he would have to tell Glaucus — Timoleon — could he but manage to have speech with the divinity!

Ion pressed onward. But he trod lightly. Pink wonders, like butterflies, might easily be frightened away. His quick ears now caught part of the women's talk. He heard the Pisan clearly:—

"You say your embroideries come from the East, and you have the chitons and mantles made in the house?"

The two were hastening their steps. They were obviously making their way Olympia-wards — towards the river bank.

"Yes—" the lady in pink replied," I have a slave who cuts, and another who drapes them, to perfection." As she spoke, she stopped, to re-adjust a fallen shoulder buckle.

Ion caught a swift glimpse of the profile — of full, roselike lips, and of the pure, perfect nose, its line one with the forehead — the true Attic outline! Ion felt his breath sensibly quicken.

The two had now resumed their walk. The Pisan was heard heaving an audible sigh.

"Well—you are to be envied! We Elians must dress as best we can. Once in five years at least, we see the world—and the fashions. The rest of the time it is all a making and a rearing of children, wearing one's life out trying to get a day's weaving done, with a house full of slaves, and no thanks for one's efforts, either. Now—I suppose—now, in Corinth no one weaves their own linen?"

Ion's smile broadened. He had the clue he had longed for. In spite of her Attic profile, the beauty came from Corinth! But what was she saying?

"Oh — the Corinthian ladies, I believe, do, indeed, still weave their own linen. But Nirias refuses to have a weav-

ing-room in the house. He insists it would weary me, would confine me over much — might hurt my voice — but where are we straying?"

Nirias! Nirias! Of all marvels! Ion felt a wild buzzing in his ears. What could Nirias of Corinth, have in common with this adorable being? Ah!—the light broke—the amazing mystery was suddenly cleared. Ion felt his brain in a whirl, yet his thought was clear. Here—a few paces ahead, actually walked the "Corinthian Wonder!" "The Incomparable!"—could it be possible?

The vision of that sunset scene at Phalerum arose, like a swiftly-placed picture, before Ion's quick mind. He saw the gauzy hills, the purple waters, and the stately trireme, its oarsmen ready to plough the meadowy seas. This swaying grace so close, so near, now, that the perfume of her draperies swept his quivering nostrils, this was the divine shape all Athens had acclaimed. She it was who had risen to the great moment, had stood, with perfect, statue-like grace, to receive a city's homage, as might its queen.

Now she was humanly, tantalizingly near. She was also, all the gods be thanked, virtually alone; there was no jealous Nirias to mount guard over her. Ion felt the very heavens open upon an endless chain of possibilities. He should, of course, presently accost this marvel. Some excuse, some plausible phrase would leap to his lip. As he dazedly attempted to frame a suitable question, flashes of fresh wonderment swept his thoughts.

If Nirias had brought the girl with him, up from Corinth, then she must have been in Nirias' train. She too must have made the long journey, up from the Elian port, along the Sacred Way! And he, never to have guessed of such a presence! And his father, never to have breathed a word of the great secret!

Ion saw the workings, as in a flash, of the whole plot.

The second, closed litter with its "aged philosopher" had been Maia's—yes—that was surely the name—how soft, how sweet the syllables! He almost breathed the name aloud, as his lips caressed the melodious vowels.

The two women had now come to a standstill. They stood, obviously irresolute. Maia showed a growing, feminine impatience. Her sentences came, with shortened breath.

"You say we had better go towards the long bridge? But the statuette merchants are closer to the other—some one said! Ye gods—how hot it is! Why did we not bring a slave with us? At least—with a parasol I should not fear being burnt to a crisp!" Obviously the beauty had a temper.

"You Corinthians are so soft!" the Pisan shot forth. She had thrown back her veil—she was turning her frozzled head about—now twisting it impatiently towards the river, now to the bridge—now backwards towards the road by which she had come. She looked for all the world like a bewildered, angry hen. "By Heavens—if we Pisans had time to think of our complexions! But where, in the names of the furies, are those booths? I could have sworn they lay directly before us! Those stupid vendors change their places every year—as though on purpose to vex one. Ah! here is a gentleman! As he is a stranger, he doubtless knows the fair—by heart."

The Pisan had turned. The two now faced Ion.

"Dear Sir — perhaps you could tell us — we seek the statuette vendors' booths — their boats will come out to us. Is it by the long, or by the short bridge, we had best stand?"

Ion stopped, stared — and was tongue-tied. Maia's startled face — her amazement and confusion, as their eyes met, made Ion conscious only of two overwhelming emo-

tions. He must prolong the moment—he must keep this "wonder" beside him—and—he must, also, force her to speak. The flush that was now crimsoning the expressive face was already one form of speech. She knew him—had surely seen or heard of him before. There had flashed from her eyes a look of recognition.

Ion's brain suddenly cleared. With easy, plausible phrases he held Pisan. He made use of all his powers of attraction.

"Ah-h Madame,— there is indeed a short way to the shore— where the statuette vendors' booths lie— but you will, I fear, be burnt alive on your way. Whereas, through the groves—'tis somewhat longer—'tis true—but the elms cast agreeable coolness. I go your way—permit me to put you on your path."

A second mounting of the pink flush over Maia's cheeks and brow, was his answer. Her eyes fell, when his searched to fix them. That was a still better eloquence. Never had he seen confusion wear a lovier aspect.

There was brief chance for speech, for the Pisan was babbling on, in loud tones, about everything, about nothing.

"If it be not an indiscretion — dear Sir — who is likely, think you, to win in the boy's race?" She did not wait for answer. "We Elians are praying Cleomenes may bear off the prize. The lad has been in training these two years. 'Twill break his father's heart, were he not to come forth victor —" On and on the words poured forth.

Ion and Maia did not really mind. Since Ion could now look his fill, since he could walk thus, on and on, he was almost content. His moment would surely come. Meanwhile he could let his eyes have a very riot of joy.

In her turn, Maia felt herself regaining self-mastery. At first, she had neither been mistress of her tongue nor her

eyes. The shock of finding Ion the hero of the Way, of Phalerum — of all creatures — and here, in this lonely road — as though he had dropped from heaven — the effort to surmount the instinct to cry his name out — to let her amazement burst forth, had required all Maia's self-mastery.

Just what words she gathered to answer Ion, she never knew. His face and eyes thrilled her. The mingled fire and sweetness she had noticed, at Phalerum, now seen and felt, at close range, were disturbing. She found herself seeking to avoid their power—their strangely searching rays. His tall, shapely frame, now so close beside her; the sweep of his mantle, and a certain unmistakable power of attraction the young man possessed, to make nerves quiver, and muscles feel like melting wax,—Ion had not walked beside Maia a dozen steps, before his strangely sweet, yet disturbing influence, was strongly upon her.

Whenever she found courage to lift her eyes, Ion's, she found, were raining down upon her their luminous fire. Involuntarily, each smiled, as their eyes met. The smile made their walking easier. Each, now, felt they could look their fill. To smile and gaze was, indeed, better than speech.

The Pisan strode on ahead. She did the talking for all three. Delighted at the capture of an Athenian — she knew Ion for an Athenian at a glance, by the way he held his mantle — the country woman joyed in the free use of her tongue. By proving herself open and free, she would get all the news she yearned to hear.

"Dear Sir — what a thing to see — such races as there'll be run after the morrow! Yes — yes, I saw several — and good ones — in my young days — when, as a maiden, I, too, ran in the palæstra. But Vesta locks the door on

us women. After marriage — no races for us. It is our business to breed the racers. Ha! Ha! Well — Madame — and if you please — keep your elbows to yourself! One doesn't work one's way through a crowd, as one would through a drove of cattle!" the Pisan angrily spit forth her words. For they had now gained the high road, and a countrywoman was using her elbows as though they were rakes.

The shore at last had been reached. The crowd of women and slaves was closing in about them. Vendors in shallow boats were seen clogging the river. Thick groups of country buyers were massed above the banks. The shrieks and bustle of bargaining voices filled the air.

Maia was close beside Ion. But the Pisan was hanging over the river bank. They heard her loud voice rising, above all others.

Ion felt, at last, his great moment had come. He held out his hand — he swung Maia in among a thick grove of trees. Laughing, breathless, grasping her draperies as best she could, Maia sped along. Ion brought her to a rest below a tall pedestal, on which stood a winged Victory — with hovering wings.

Behind the pedestal Ion stood, with outstretched hands. His eyes rained life, delight. Again Maia felt their sweet fierce power.

"You are Maia — of Corinth," Ion cried out, in ringing voice. He seemed to be amazingly happy, in saying this. His whole face was aglow.

"And you are Ion," laughed Maia, with bubbling voice. Then, involuntarily, their hand-clasp tightened. Their eyes were interlocked. For a full moment they stood thus, Maia attempting to withdraw her hand. Ion's grasp was of iron. Again he bent upon her that look of compelling sweetness. To have him look upon her thus — to feel him

come nearer — nearer still — Maia shivered. A weakness she had never imagined could come upon her, shook her; she felt her knees giving away. As one in actual pain, she bent her head now this way, now that. She heard Ion's low voice, broken, tremulous — his head was bent, his eyes, his very lips seemed to seek hers. It was as though a lightning bolt from heaven's blue had shot downward to transfix Maia — to rivet her frame.

Ion seemed as sensibly moved. Yet he found words—broken, tremulous—he breathed them forth. "Oh-h—I beseech thee—seek not to put me away—look up! Let me but drink deep. Ah-h—if you knew—but knew how—since that day—since Phalerum—I have had but one thought—one dream—"

Maia heard the words as one who hears, at last, celestial music. She feared to look—to meet those deep, divine eyes—and yet, could she but nerve herself—could she—

Ion, with bold courage had now clasped Maia's shoulder. His bared warm arm curled about her neck. After that, to have the lips meet seemed the only possible speech. In that delicious meeting, the two souls met and were married. Like the mating of the immortal gods, those two having met, looked, loved and kissed.

As Maia released herself, her eyes, at last were given, with all their happy trance of joy, to Ion's. She attempted to voice the tremendous, the overwhelming emotion. "You — I — Oh-h how strange it all is! How came we to —?"

But Ion was now softly kissing her lids. What was speech before such an ecstacy of touch?

After a moment, Maia drew herself away. Hand locked in hand, the two wandered on, beneath the trees' deep shade. It seemed the full of bliss to walk thus, to feel the other so near, so close —

Speech came at last. Confused, halting, the sentences grew longer, fuller.

Ion poured forth his longing, his thoughts, dreams, conjectures. "From the very first—dearest Maia—you drew—you had won me to you—on that golden evening, as you stood—a divine image of grace, of beauty, against the azure. All other women, for me, died then. In all these months—Maia! Maia!—your name has filled my soul—my thoughts. How can you wonder that, seeing you—you knew me for your very own?"

A shepherd's piping brought the long kiss with which she answered him to an end. As Maia released herself, she re-captured, in part, her lost self-control. Ion's arm again clasped her shoulder. Walking thus, the two heads were almost on a level.

Yet, when she began to speak, there seemed but little to say. Eventful as had been her life, and varied as was her history, all past experience seemed to shrivel into nothingness besides this new, this mighty power that swept her whole being. In disjointed, incoherent phrases, Maia, in her turn, strove to confess her loneliness, her longing to find kindred, the hardness of her life with Manes, the mixed feelings she felt towards Nirias. But she was as one talking in a dream. The only reality was Ion's wondrous nearness — his soft soul-subduing glance, and the strange sweet beauty of his dear face.

Maia drew deep, tremulous sighs. She knew of a certainty now what had come upon her. This Ion had stolen her soul away. She was his for evermore. What difference did one or a thousand kisses make? He owned them and her. Her whole being had passed into his keeping.

In the far distance a voice was presently heard calling. The Pisan was shricking aloud Maia's name. Maia started.

"Ion — dearest — I must go," she breathed. Yet even as she moved, she ventured to press her cheek against Ion's breast.

He drew the dear head close. He lifted a golden tress to his lips, and then hurriedly, he said: "Listen — dearest — most beautiful of women! As you know, the games open in a few days. I cannot hope to be free — to come to you, until the Procession is over. But my slave Persia will bring you my greeting. He shall go to you at dawn. Nirias and my father will be then at the games, with all the rest of the world. Lift your eyes — my beloved. Oh Maia — I bless Heaven for the gift of such love!"

The wings of the motionless Victory seemed to flutter above them, in sympathy with this quivering human emotion. There was a long final clasp — and each went their way.

In another instant life's stream had re-captured the two lovers. The Pisan had found Maia, and was hurrying her homewards. She exultingly displayed some painted images of her favourite god, that she had bought, at an unheard-of price. "The gods, this year, are cheap at the Fair!" Ion heard her cry, as she swept her treasures before Maia's eyes.

The hum and roar of the Fair struck Ion's ears, as he re-crossed the Bridge. The Fair was having its last great day. Once the games opened, the festival pilgrims would have no time for viewing either marble masterpieces, Corinthian vases, or the costly tapestries and gems, Eastern merchants brought, to tempt Greek taste.

Ion worked his way easily, joyously, through crowds of barbarians from all over the world. He had only gay words for a tight squeeze, and no time whatever for the most perfect master-pieces of sculpture. He was walking on soft, yielding air. He was alive only to the world of sensation, emotion, and rapture that filled his soul.

At one corner, indeed, he did stay his steps. The word "soul" enchained his ear. Now that he really knew of what that spirit was capable, it would be amusing to hear the latest absurdity in the matter of a theory, voiced by philosophy.

Ion drew near to a group of pretty young gentlemen. Several wore wreaths about their perfumed locks. Their faces showed serious looks. A learned lecturer was telling these votaries of idleness and fashion the interesting fact "That the soul of man is immortal, and at one time has an end, which is termed dying; and at another time is born again, but is never destroyed. And the moral is, that a man ought to live always in perfect holiness." The wreathed heads nodded, gravely, in admiring response.

Ion smiled — his happy laughter all but burst from him, as he leapt, upward, along the hill slope, towards his tent. "And I — I know a philosophy of life better and truer than yours — O wise man! One that better befits the brilliant bloom of youth. 'Tis to love battle, and the games, and dear women — to yearn to carry off the triple prize — to be crowned victor at Olympia, to win Aphrodite's blessing and Mars' approval. O — Maia! Maia! Divine thou art — and already dear beyond all words — for the very thought of thee makes victory seem easy!"

When Ion entered the tent, he found his father and Nirias at their light evening meal. Even Nirias lifted startled amazed eyes. Never had he seen Ion as radiant, as instinct with the lovely forces of youth. Crates followed Ion's motions with positive rapture, as Ion made his swift toilet for the meal; he was talking, laughing, gesticulating,

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with such impetuous ardour and perfect grace, as to make every point of his beauty the more effective.

With a gratified grunt of delight, Ion flung himself down beside his father. Leaning forward he clasped Crates to his warm breast. He kissed him, effusively, with boyish rapture. "Father! father!—a god has spoken to me out yonder—in the hills! We shall win—dear man—surely we shall win! Never did I hear a god's voice speak as plainly!"

Nirias and Crates smiled—in delighted assent. Ion entirely omitted to name the god. Nor did it cross Ion's dazed mind that, during the whole interview with Maia, he had never once made mention of either car or of horses.

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## Chapter XIII

#### THE POMPIC WAY

For a man in love, the days that followed might have been the quickest of cures. Ion was hurried from one excitement to another. These days immediately preceding the opening of the Games were filled with engagements, the taking of oaths, the making of costly sacrifie,—to please his father—the registering of bets, on the favourite—on the Thessalian lad whom every one, even the trainers were certain would win the true Olympic—the runners' race—and with banquets that must be gone to and given.

Yet through every waking moment, in the midst of the most portentous events, the thought of Maia rose up to flood Ion's soul with sub-conscious delight. This birth of love had brought an extraordinary elation—a sustained ecstacy of feeling that made every act important—and therefore the easier to perform, and that assuaged the teasing wear to easier endurance.

At last the great day dawned! Before night ended, Ion would know the verdict of Olympia on his car. In the great procession that opened the games, the Olympic contestants were passed in review. The verdicts given along the Pompic Way were to be dreaded—to be heard in trembling—those hundreds of trained eyes could so often voice failure or success!

As the sun sank, and the amber moon showed low above the purple Arcadian hills, Ion felt the rising pulse of the Olympian excitement. In a few short shades the silver trumpets would sound. As Ion swept into the warm, golden night, his step upon the blistered hillslope was winged with joy. The quickened throb upon the air, the familiar beat upon the Elian night of a world making ready, the tumult and clamour of these moving, agitated thousands thrilled every quivering nerve.

Ion found his father standing at the opening of Nirias' tent. He was staring down at the Altis. He was stamping, with impatience; he called, aloud, to a dozen gods to come and look upon Nirias—in his role of a fatuous fool.

"Yea!—go in—in, I say, and see a man as vain as a woman! We've wasted a whole shade, to have Nirias' hair properly curled!" was Crates' angry greeting to his son.

Ion's eyes danced with mirth. He took in with amused delight, his father's characteristic indifference to the niceties of display. Crates' festival robes had been long since donned. The flowers of his garland were already fading. What cared he—at his age—how his robes hung? As for Nirias—this his passion for dress—he cried out—in renewed disgust, marked the weakness of his nature. When a man—nearly sixty—took to women and clothes!—Crates finished his comment with a fresh oath.

Ion's laughter was still warming him, as he hastened to enter the tent.

Nirias had no eyes for the young man's festival splendour. Its effects of studied simplicity were lost upon the Corinthian.

Mago was in the very act of clasping a huge jewel about his master's stout arm. Nirias' eyes strayed from his mirror to take in one point of Ion's costume —

"Ah-h! I see you wear your breast garlands as though they were a wreath—" he cried, as he studied the effect of the thick, closely woven rope of flowers, above wnose illiptical curves, Ion's bared breast and throat rose, with the noble lines of young strength.

"Yes," answered Ion,—his eyes dancing.

"Then it is thus I will wear mine. Change the flowers Mago — put them a little lower than Ion's — thus." The garland was finally settled to Nirias' satisfaction. His mirror showed him the full expanse of his fat neck, a pulpy white mass of flesh, rising above the roses.

Ion secretly wondered if vanity as dense could seize upon a man, like some disfiguring disease, and leave the victim all unconscious of the hideous face it wore. He thought of Maia—and of her possible marriage to this lump of selfishness—and his anger rose to boiling point. "Come O Nirias—we are late—even now father is fuming—." He could scarce control his voice.

"Your father has been fretting since the sun rose. He would have started for the Altis at dawn—to hold his place—had I been willing."

At this outburst Ion's anger melted in mirth—this comedy of two elderly men's bad temper, kept his lips quivering—even as the two now passed toward the tent opening.

At the door, Nirias' fussiness broke forth anew.

"Mago — the bottle of unguent — have you thought of that? And the wine —?"

"Yes! yes, master — all are here." Mago pointed to the full basket he held — to the cushions a slave was carrying.

"Then — for goodness sake — let us go forth!" cried Crates, his impatience now gnawing as though it had living fangs.

But Ion had flung his arm about his father. Under the

pressure of that dear clasp, Crates' anger soon melted away.

Ion's exhilerant delight was found contagious. Crates' lips presently reflected Ion's smile of joyous assurance. Ah-h, this dearest of sons! What a nature — what high courage, what serene belief in the god of chance, and his sure blessing!

"We'll take a turn in the Altis first, dear father," Ion cried, as he swept his father onward. "We'll see all the more distinguished celebrities—and then, after a little, we'll press onward, toward the Temple. I chose a place on the Temple steps I think we can surely secure—."

"You think of all things, my Ion — you leave nothing to chance," cried Crates, in parental rapture at having fathered such a prodigy.

"Alas! — my race is in Hermes' hands!" mocked Ion. "There's no outwitting that dear god."

"But surely - you have no fears -"

His words were lost. He was borne backwards, toward Nirias. A company of youths, dashing downward, had swept Ion before them. These young lads had their arms about each other's necks. Their heads, arms, and necks were garlanded with roses and jasmine. They shed a delicious fragrance, as they made their way half dancing, half gliding, and gaily singing, as they swept onwards.

The five slender bodies, swaying harmoniously to the steps of an improvised dance, were as beautiful as a sculptured frieze.

"Saw you those lads? One of them reminded me of Ion—at his age. "Ah-h, but here you are!" Crates cried out, as Ion rejoined his party.

"Come —" Ion cried, his voice full of quivering excitement, "the crowd is enormous, this year. I never saw

so many barbarians. I have already spoken to some Persian courtiers I met, at court, last spring. They tell me they slept on deck the whole of the voyage — the ships were so full mattresses were not to be had, for a king's ransom."

Crates laughed, and nodded responsive joy, at the prospect of an overcrowded Olympia. His shrewd eyes took in the brilliant scene.

Like a great theatre awaiting its audience, the Altis lay below, white, silent, all but emptied of life. Fenced in by its walls the sacred city seemed now some fabled realm. The population of its massed statues lifted warm, flesh-tinted arms, or wreaths, or olive branches, to the gods shining down, from the deep pediments;—the fluttering robes of the Victories, the mute prayers on the lips of suppliant contestants, and the pressing feet of racing youths, were fixed in immutable impotency. This marble multitude was awaiting, as were the Temples, the great altar, the shining rows of the Zanes, the stately line of the Treasuries, and the glistening gods, for the entrance of living throngs, to give to Zeus the glad worship of tongues that could shout, and of hearts that could swell, as the Syrian incense rose.

As the Altis was in itself the very centre and focal point of Olympia, so the throng now assembling, within its walls, seemed to present to Greek eyes a summary of all mankind. Pig-like Arcadians, with coarse faces and tangled hair were close beside god-like limbed young Athenians, whose garlands and bronze skins shone as did those of the statues above them. Wreathed poets and musicians stood near or talked to wrestlers among whom were some whose eyes, set obliquely, whose long ears, and bristling hair, gave them an animal look. Athletes, whose chaste lines of feature told of long months of hard training, naked, with but a garland

for ornament, made the centre of a group of Athenian gentlemen whose rich robes, carefully placed floral adornments, and distinguished bearing, proclaimed them noble.

Sicilians; fierce-beaked Jews; curly-headed Medes, whose white arms and legs shone out, against their costly robes thick with gold and silver embroideries; liquid-eyed Persians, whose arms and fingers glistened with gems; Gauls, with locks streaming upon their shoulders like a moon-lighted river; and Greeks of widely contrasting types, some with skins blackened by Eastern suns, others embrowned by Italia's kindlier light, yet all — whether white, black, or brown, proving alike the extent of Hellenic dominion and its adventurous spirit — here within this narrow strip of holy ground were men from every clime and country.

Upon them all, the moon poured its transfiguring light. Whether noble or slave, whether beautiful or hideous, forms and faces were softened, were etherealized.

As a great sculptor gives to his perfected statue a peculiar bloom — some quality of shining only flowers and leaves in nature show — so this moon of Hellas touched the statue-like youths and young men with a celestial lustre.

Nirias forgot his ailments. Crates even forgot his Ion. They walked about, with eyes wide with delight.

"Look! — saw you ever such a wonder?" Nirias pointed toward a white-wreathed youth, walking past their group.

"Yes—he is very beautiful. But see—yonder is Socrates," cried Ion, "he is surrounded, as usual—even here—and at such a time, by a cluster of beautiful young men.

Look—"

A scene as familiar in the Hellas of their day, as it has since become one of the immortal possessions of mankind, presented itself.

### ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

A manly form, with broad shoulders, whose breast was carelessly bared, a loose coarse mantle escaping the confining clutch of the relaxed upper arm — for hands and arms were being constantly used, in graceful, effective gesture — this was the famous shape standing beneath a broad plane tree. The face was partly in shadow. When it emerged from the dimmer tree shade, the light upon the face did not borrow its glow from the moon's splendour. It was a face rather lighted from within, than from without. Homely, inharmonious as were the features, so radiant were the spiritual forces, the whole face was fused and blent, into a kind of sublimity. The sweetness, serenity, and the trained capacity of sustained exaltation, furnished the inward light that had sublimated the coarser physical clay.

The group about Socrates was the one still, separate circle in all that sea of moving thousands.

Many, as they passed the group, stopped, idly, to listen; some were caught by a phrase, or by some startling truth, presented in a new, unlooked-for form, and were held. Thus the circle widened.

"What a man! A true sorcerer!" Crates grunted, disdainfully, turning his back on the philosopher. "Wasting thus the time of our youth!—filling their heads with nonsense and impiety. Ah well—my Ion—you escaped the contagion. I have never ceased to rejoice I sent you to Anaxagoras—"

"Father, father, how constant is your hate!" was Ion's smiling answer. Then his voice rose to quickened excitement, as his eyes caught sight of some gentlemen moving slowly, toward them. "See—the lion comes—and the crowd scatters, as before its king!"

Ion and Crates, as well as Nirias, took up their position. They stood facing the familiar shape. Others, hearing the cry and the growing buzz of expectation, with the monkey-

like, imitative nature of crowds, crept, also, backwards, pressing against pedestals and tree-trunks.

Between the human aisles thus made, a kingly form of composed, majestic bearing moved with a certain deliberate grace of leisure.

All Hellas knew that princely stride. A breathless world of curious, eager-eyed barbarians pressed beyond the close-packed Hellenic wall, to look upon Athens' idol.

Alcibiades wore his festival robes with the same negligent grace with which he trailed his purples in the mud of Athenian streets. He swept the great scene with measuring, yet semi-indifferent gaze. Men, statues, garlanded athletes, beautiful human forms—clothed, like the nudity of the gods, in celestial light—the critical, sensuous-lidded, haughty eyes swept them all, as though the Altis were but a magnificent setting and the world gathered therein an army, assembled that he, Alcibiades, might pass the multitude in review.

With an arm swept indolently about the neck of Glaucus, Alcibiades turned to Timoleon, whose dark face was beside him.

"Look Timoleon — yonder is the new beauty. That little Serapion will give Hermes himself a lesson in jealousy. I never saw lovely modesty and young beauty as perfectly wed!"

The crowd swallowed his words. Serapion, whoever he might be, was as now as famous for comeliness as were Thebes or Ion of the Piraeus, for having horses that could run.

It was with a certain wonder those Athenian-born, among the mass of onlookers, saw the great leader slow his steps, before a well known un-aristocratic face. A few of the politically well-informed smiled, as they watched and heard Alcibiades' well-phrased flatteries.

## 144 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

Crates of the Piræus and his son, then, were of large account, in Alcibiades' clever calculations! Even here, even in this heady festival hour, this god among politicians could remember to win men, by showing them honour before the eyes of all.

Alcibiades had, indeed, stopped, as his all-seeing eyes met Crates' shrewd flaming glance, and Ion's steady gaze.

Glaucus and Timoleon smiled their greeting; they stood talking to Ion, as Alcibiades lisped his flatteries.

"Ah-h here's Crates! Greeting, dear man! And to you, too, dear Ion. Only this morning I saw your four—again. I took a turn about your stalls. That Pollux is a horse in a thousand!—he and Xenias would win in any race. Yet—if I am not much mistaken, Thebes' coursers will give your car a hard tussle for a victory. And Corinth, too, will not be far behind—"

Crates could find no words to prove a belief in his own stable. Stammering, he faltered a doubt as to Thebes' wisdom in choosing as reckless a driver as Porus — one known to be as tricky.

Alcibiades appeared to extract a certain amount of amusement out of the Piræan's terrorised state, and then, with an insolent haughtiness, proceeded to ignore him.

"Come," he lisped softly, turning to Timoleon. "See — yonder stands Socrates. By Minerva's wise eyes — even here — he gathers an audience. Let us hear whether he is still talking about holiness and the soul — and those Sicilians — where are they? They must be made to talk —"

The splendid figure resumed its graceful walk. One of the gods, descended from his pedestal, and turned mortal, could not have had a more detached, separate air of conscious divinity.

Yet had Olympia but known! — had Athens but known! Above the sweet-voiced flatteries, above the tinkle of cym-

bals, and the songs of lovely youth, the grave figure of an avenging Fate was lifting its tragic mumur!

For the Sicilians were whispering to the great leader and to Timoleon news of Syracuse that made the four Athenian eyes meet and glisten as they met. And thus amid the sound of flutes, of festal laughter, and of dancing steps, the doom of Athens was sealed.

On the broad Temple steps, as Ion had foretold, the party had found a footing. They were part now of a spectacle difficult to surpass, for beauty and effectiveness, even in Olympia.

The wide steps surrounding the great Temple of Zeus were packed with a dense, white crowd. The graceful folds of tunics and flowing himatia gave to the moving, shifting multitude an indescribable dignity. Heads and breasts were garlanded with thick wreaths and ropes of flowers. Thus these worshippers symbolized their union with their god.

Massed thus, this festal throng seemed to form the living base of the stern Doric Temple. Aloft, far above the crowd of worshippers, the gods leaned forth, from beneath their heavy cornice. The one shape missing in the vast masculine world seemed now, silently, with still calm, to have joined the multitude. Out of the stately central group, Hippodamia stood; she fingered her veil, as though she was uplifting it in the nuptial chamber.

Meanwhile the moon rose higher and ever higher. When the sky was fully flooded with the thick golden light, the time was near.

The Pompic Way was being cleared. The great moment had come. There was an instant of perfect, awed silence.

## 146 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

So still was the crowd, that, in the clear Elian air, a quick ear could hear the slipping of the river.

Out of the hushed quiet, silver-tongued notes suddenly pierced the sweet silence. From end to end of the sacred valley, the silver trumpets rang out their brazen chords.

The multitude shook, as with a common tremor. The whole Greek world thrilled, as one.

As the sonorous trumpets shrilled their strains, other dear familiar sounds came to the ears of these listening thousands. There was the bite upon the air of clinking armour; there was the soft fall of hundreds of sandalled feet, and the snort and dash of plunging horses told every waiting worshipper the line, at last, had formed.

After the trumpets, came the soaring voices of chanting youths. The procession was moving onward, without the walls. Its progress could be distinctly traced, as near and ever nearer came the heavenly voices, blent in choral harmonies. Those heading the splendid train were now passing the tinted columns of the Heroon; now they were close to the tomb of Pelops; next mighty Zeus, in his great temple, would hear the celestial prayers chanted in his honour, as he sat on his gilded throne, awaiting the worship of men.

Nearer and nearer swept the thrill-awakening notes of resonant lyres and of melodious harps. The lark-like sweep of summer-tongued flutes rose, shrilling, above less piercing notes.

The shouts of those without the walls, these glad murmurous acclamations, rang upon the ear like a mighty song sung to a tumultuous accompaniment. Strong men felt their breath indrawn; young men showed awed faces, and even to barbarians was communicated the quick contagion of this supreme Greek emotion.

Timoleon and Glaucus stood beyond the Temple steps. They had lost Alcibiades, at the very moment of taking their places. He had murmured something about one of the priests having begged him to accept a seat on the steps of the Treasury of Athena, and he had left them. Timoleon and Glaucus had remained where they were, below the tall pedestal of Paionias's Victory; they could scarcely have had a better outlook.

As the choir rang out its clear harmonies, both the young men felt the common thrill pulsing within.

"Timoleon — I never hear that hymn — but I am once more a lad — innocent and pure — and — and —" Glaucus' emotion overcame him.

Timoleon flung an arm about his friend's shoulder. At such a moment, all small personal feelings were overwhelmed by the mounting tide of this divine experience. Timoleon, also, was inexpressibly moved, stirred, melted. Love and worship are, indeed, singularly akin, he thought.

He felt Glaucus suddenly writhe, beneath his grasp. With an angry twitch, he was turning, he was crying, upward, backward,

"Don't crowd — keep off — I say — my shoulders are not a footstool —"

Then his voice broke, as he gurgled—"Well—of things unheard of, to slide thus down a pedestal!" He laughed as he lisped his protest.

Ion had noiselessly slipped along an edge of the broad base of the pedestal, thus making his way over the heads of the crowd. He was now beside his friends.

The crowd gave Ion place. A murmur rose up, as he made his appearance. Was not this beautiful young man the Piræan—the Ion of Piræus—whose horses were to run? Admiring eyes ran over the nobly-formed features, the broad, slightly panting chest, and the straight limbs.

Ion's costly festival tunic, his few but perfect gems, and his rich garlands made his coming contest bring imagined victory. Several among the on-lookers determined to increase their bets.

Ion stood between his friends. Timoleon gave him a scrutinizing glance.

"So you are not to mount your car, after all that has been said?" Timoleon narrowed his eyes. For this had been a much-discussed point.

At any other time not to have Ion take his advice would have angered him. But now—well—anger, with that music swelling up—with the gods all about, gloriously lighted—with Ion looking unusually handsome, and, as usual, his eyes beaming trust and a great sweetness, Timoleon found even irritation pass from him.

Ion had clasped Timoleon's firm back; he was pressing him, with loving ardour. "Dear Timoleon—you must forgive me. I felt Glaucus, and not we, were in the right about this matter. You would not, surely, have me lower myself before the eyes of all?—"

Beneath the power of Ion's pleading gaze, Timoleon felt saintly qualities grow within. "Indeed, no! dear man—you were right—and I wrong. I only thought of the effect your beauty might produce—"

And Ion laughed, drew Gaucus and Timoleon the closer, strained his long neck outward, and cried softly, joyously,

"They are coming — dear men — they are turning — even now —"

And they, and all about them, stood rigid, fixed.

The procession had entered the Altis.

A choir of youths showing the pink and browns of perfect bloom, moved slowly into the moon's full light. Their rounded arms were uplifted. From beneath their festive wreaths the harmonious features, showing no defective strain of thought, were as joyous and as serene as those of the gods they invoked.

Their trained steps were attuned to the hymn they chanted. Behind this youthful choir swept long lines of priests. Their ample white or purple robes fell in statuesque perfection. Chosen for their venerable beauty, many showed Jove-like features.

The Hellanadocæ followed. The warm purples of these Elian judges' robes made deep notes of contrasting colours. These umpires stepped with proud courage. Conscious of their high place, in this, their worship of the gods, they moved with stately, noble grace.

Bursts of martial music preceded groups of warriors in shining armour. The Pyrrhic dance was skillfully stepped by vouthful Athenians new to military service, yet whose finished athletic training gave to every motion and gesture harmonious beauty. The warlike dance; the shining embrowned limbs below the burnished shields; the scultured helmets that flashed forth the figures of Mars, of Pallas Athene, of Hermes; the following lines of light that flamed from the high-held spears and the spirited, intoxicating strains of the familiar military music woke to sudden frenzy the whole Greek world. Every man saw passing before him the battles, the hand-to-hand death struggles, the madness and the glory of war. Strong men shook, as with a palsy; others wept; and when some deep rich voice lifted a true, pure note, in unison with the music, such a shout of song burst forth as shook the very hills.

Already the famous Apolline Hymn was filling every ear with ecstacy. Beautiful youths, their curls crisp gold, their forms wonders of soft grace, specially selected for their skill in dancing and posturing, were next in line, presenting exquisite poses, and intricate steps.

Behind the dancers came gorgeously garmented priests -

priests of Apollo from Delphi and Delos. They had each brought from these, the two most famous shrines of the god, the best and most noted singers and dancers. The whole world was the gainer by the jealous rivalry between the two houses of the gods, to prove each its special sanctuary the superior. The gods were worshipped as they reigned over men — Immortals fired with mortal passions.

The flutter of excitement and curiosity deepened. An awed religious feeling permeated throughout Olympia.

Merely to look upon the priests of the Eleusinian Mysteries and the one priestess—this advancing priestess of Demeter—who was allowed to participate in the Olympian ceremonies—merely to witness as thrill-giving a spectacle, men would have come from the ends of the Greek world.

Homer's immortal hymn to Demeter rose up, in strong choral harmonies. This Eleusinian choir was larger than had been any other. The orchestral accompaniment of lyres, zithers, flutes, harps, and trumpets made the air thick with the soaring flight of song, and of carefully studied harmonic effects.

Eyes were gladdened by a long line of the dancing youths, whose symmetrical motions and perfectly matched steps could have served, at any moment of changeful posture or motion, for the model of the frieze of temples.

A space separated the Priestess and her dancing hierophants. The moon shone bright between. Its gold seeemed to pave the way with glory for the coming of the sorrowing goddess.

"The blue robe gathered itself, as she walked, in many folds about her feet." Out of the folds, the ever-advancing figure of the priestess moved. Before her, even as the voices hymned—"a fragrant odour fell from her raiment—The spirit of beauty breathed about her—And her flesh

shone from afar "— into the golden pathway of light, Demeter's priestess moved, the living embodiment of her whom she served.

As the lovely priestess passed, men breathed deep and long. Tears rose; even strong men were not ashamed to let them fall. For Demeter came close, in her innumerable varied phases, to the heart of every Greek. Long before Homer, the husbandman, the farmer, ancestors of those now present, had worshipped the primitive mother of all growth. To others, as her blue robe paled in the distance, the priestess had evoked the memory of those who had passed into the world beyond; thoughts of lost children, of dead wives, rose up, to blot out joy. And others felt the stirring of a more mystic union with the deeper forces of life, with the mysterious enigmas of human destiny.

And so, beyond and above the flutes and the melodious melting of young voices and harps, the Greek world heard other voices; it thrilled to this passing of woman — who held, like Demeter, within her bosom, the deep sources of life and love and a belief in better things.

Scarcely had the mighty chorus come to an end, when fresh ringing shouts greeted the true Olympian contestants.

The runners, who on the morrow were to open the Games, and their trainers, were followed by long lines of wrestlers, boxers, and discus throwers.

Glaucus made a swift note, on his tablet. He would change his bets. The favourite runner looked better now, seen thus in full clear contrast with his compeers, than he had appeared in the running track.

"Wilt venture a hundred on the Megarian — my Ion?" he lisped, insinuatingly, as he leaned affectionately nearer to his friend.

"Two — if you like," answered Ion, dreamily. The favourites, for a wonder, had left him cold. The passing

of Demeter had stirred a deeper, a stronger chord of feeling. Thought had taken a strange flight. Above the flutes and the dancing, as beyond the splendour of these moving figures, the shadow of fate seemed to have fallen. Something—a fear—a spectral shape, wearing terrifying looks, had blotted out, for an instant, all Olympia. The strangest part of the momentary horror was his seeing Maia's face loom, adorably kind and loving, above and beyond the dreadful spectre.

Ion shuddered, shook himself, rubbed his eyes, and entered a bet with Glaucus of such fabulous enormity as to make even Glaucus cry—"You are mad—yet, who knows? But here come the chariots."

Ion quivered.—Yes — Glaucus had heard aright. The jingle of moving wheels, the plunging, snorting, and deep breathing of restive steeds now filled the air. Ion was conscious of quick trembling — but he managed to keep his face firm.

A long murmurous wave swept the packed crowds. Heads, far as one could see, were stretched above other heads; every eye that could catch sight of the cars was wide with delight. The most exciting moment of the long procession was culminating.

First Thebes, then Corinth, then Syracuse and some of the lesser cities' chariots passed, one after the other. The burnished cars, with their perfectly adjusted running gear, the grace of the charioteers, as they stood, erect, gently swaying to the motion of the chariot, and the contrasting points of beauty in the teams, made that triple combination of men, horses, and gleaming chariots work its ever-stirring enthusiasm.

A break in the passing of the cars had occurred. Out of a pause, in which a quick stillness came, a sudden distant ripple, as of subdued laughter, rose up. Ion, Timoleon, Glaucus, as did those about them, looked into each other's eyes, to ask of the other the reason of this strange sound. What had happened? Was it delight or was it mockery—this laughter? Ion felt premonitory shivers. He was certain this amazing growing mirth was occasioned, in some way, by his car. It was the very moment when his own chariot should pass—its place in the procession had long since been settled.

"Timoleon — Glaucus — see you aught the matter?" Ion felt his vision was suddenly clouded. So great was his emotion, his eyes no longer seemed to see — his ears heard no longer aright.

Timoleon and Glaucus, for all answer, were, also, seen to be struggling with laughter.

"Look, dear boy — Pollux, also, honours the gods with dancing!" cried Glaucus, his voice shaken with a tremor of delight.

Ion's chill of fear no longer shook him. A warm, sweet flood of joy suffused his frame. His chariot was now in full view. Those near by, as they caught sight of that which had aroused such universal merriment, in their turn, broke forth into muffled applause. Ion caught the perceptible swell of pleased, delighted chuckling, the quick Greek joy in horses.

The chariot, he noted, had never run more smoothly. The stallions moved with spirited, rhythmic steps. Their coats glittered and glistened. The small shapely heads, short muscular necks, powerful shoulders, and haunches tapering to the slender hocks, each one of the four was a model of equine perfection.

Ion breathed short, joyous breaths. Even he could not have wished his "four" to make a braver show.

As Pollux passed, Ion's smothered shout burst from him. As though the sensitive creature had conscious knowledge

of the great moment, of the true inner meaning of the festal occasion, with delicate, graceful steps, Pollux was dancing. The freedom of his motions was practically unhindered. Held by a loose rein, as the nigh leader, Pollux was left free to practice his steps. Before his great audience, Pollus continued to perform, with wondrous skill and dexterity. Now curvetting, now prancing, now lifting hind legs or fore legs, Pollux kept step with his fellows, yet practised, with perfect freedom and surety, his graceful evolutions.

"Provided he runs as well as he dances — yonder stallion has already won his master's race," cried a stalwart Thessalian, with eyes trained to grasp all the points of a horse.

Ion longed to answer. But his chariot had now passed. Other private cars were calling forth admiring comments. Ion was forced to admit, as a new splendid quadriga slowly stepped past, the beauty of the Libyan chariot.

As the last car passed, Ion felt a conscious drop of interest. The great moment of the pageant, for him, at least, had been lived through. The glory of the spectacle seemed to have led up but to the appearance of his quadriga. What followed could be but anti-climax. Could he manage to escape? Would the crowds let him pass?

Glaucus and Timoleon turned, simultaneously, with wonder in their eyes.

"What in heaven's name possesses thee?" cried Timoleon, as he watched Ion's desperate efforts to force a passage.

"I—I—would find my father," said Ion, rather at a loss for adequate excuse. It did indeed seem poor taste to turn one's back on the procession, once his quadriga had passed. Yet, the bare truth was, now that he had seen the chariots, Ion was eager to be gone. Elsewhere there was promised better amusement. In yonder woods—across the river—at the very thought of what awaited

him, Ion felt his breath hot upon his lips. A growing, gnawing impatience was upon him. It angered him to see the thick unyielding mass behind, before him—at every point men were massed as thick as figs in a basket. None would yield him space.

Ion found himself, indeed, forced to wait.

And then, suddenly, once more the glow and stir of the Olympian ecstacy touched him, caught, and held him. He was filled anew with a divine emotion — he was one with his fellows, in this moment of mounting exaltation.

Hymns and peons had thickened upon the stilled air. The sacred bull was being led onward, to the great altar. White as snow, its gilded horns were roped with garlands.

From temple steps and terrace heights, the multitude had now slowly swept downward, to move into line. With uplifted arms, with trained, tuneful voices, the whole Greek world burst into song, as they marched. The mighty hymn was swung aloft, upon the breath of thousands, and the listening hills echoed the praise of this world of men, to Zeus, mighty Sawiour of Men.

Superb, triumphant, the rolling sonorous pæon smote upon the ears of the god. In the golden nimbus of the light that poured through the hypæthral opening of his Temple, Zeus sat, in his separate divine calm, clothed in kingly vestment. In his bright courts, enthroned in splendour, bland, compassionate, divinely remote from human weaknesses, Zeus heard and waited — waited as gods wait, for this worship to roll on through the long aisles of yet unbuilt temples.

The great altar, once crimsoned with the blood of the victim, incense rose, a dense scented column.

A new madness next possessed the multitude. The pæon scarcely ended, and the crowd, with common impulse, made a wild, frenzied rush for the Stadion. To sit out the night

— to be sure of a seat on the marble benches of the great building,— these struggling thousands would have outstepped their nearest and dearest to gain a coveted place from which to view the runners' race, at dawn.

Ion was beside himself with impatience — for his own great moment had come,— yet he took time to look about him — where had Nirias — where had his father gone? They were nowhere to be seen. He then could fly!

At last - at last he was free!

As he ran, his heart beat in wild pulsations. The great emotions of the night, the chants and the mighty pæon, throbbed still, upon his responsive ear. Yet, louder than twanging lyres or tuneful hymn, sang the voice of fluttering hope. The strength of the great longing that shook him, made the glory of beholding even to-morrow's race, seem a secondary matter, to reaching the banks of the Alpheios in time.

# Chapter XIV

#### A NIGHT IN ARCADIA

Ion's way took him through the moonlit streets of the great Fair. They were as still as a deserted city. The breathless quiet of stalls and bazaars, after the prodigious animation of the Altis, made Ion's beating heart throb the louder. He had passed into an unreal, spiritual world.

Radiant-eyed Victories held out bronze crowns, to his hope and longing. Steeds plunging in the soft air, taking flight from marble base, lured him to remember that the crown of wild olive was above Aphrodite's giving.

But to Ion's hot impatience, every looming pedestal was an obstacle as huge as a mountain. One thought—one ache of passionate anxiety possessed him; would Maia have come? Had Persia found her? Would she have managed to escape the Pisan woman's vigilance?

At the river bank Ion stood fixed, staring, his hot blood turning cold in the warmth of the night. He could not believe his eyes. The Alpheios was as deserted as was the City of the Fair!

Ion sent his eyes wide and far. No moving boat, not even a motionless shallop was to be discerned. Ion's quick breath seemed frozen upon his lips. Until he was confronted with the silent languor of the scarce rippling river, he had not measured the true depth, the fulness of his great longing.

Not to see Maia, on this night of nights, not to know her his, not to consecrate this, their mighty love — Ion knew at last, as he stood, still, shuddering, fixed in the stiffened agony of disappointment that Maia beside him in this silver night, and Maia housed and captive, meant the proud exultant wearing of the crown of all life held as best, or life to flow on, meaningless, void, carrying to lesser things the cruel knowledge of having missed the central jewel in the crown of joy.

Never before in his varied love-life had Ion felt as Maia had made him feel — toward love — toward life. Not knowing her, he had lived his life lightly, almost aimlessly, letting the gay stream carry him onward. Once seen and loved, all life seemed concentrated in that one single form — in that soul, whose divine qualities were laced with fiery mortal passion!

The knowledge of this, rose before Ion, as he faced his slow acceptance of defeat. For there could be no other meeting. Were the gods to refuse to bless their union now — But Ion's soul — courageous as it was, could not face the awful possibility. He felt, he knew that he would pace on and on, till dawn. He would outwatch the stars.

Now up, now down he strode. The silent river barely lisped its feeble paces. The opposite Arcadian hills bloomed and glowed, as though to mock his hope. Save for the distant whir of Olympia — the world was very still.

Out of the stillness, a faint, far-away splash was heard. Could it be Persia? Was he steering his boat — had the moment of moments actually come? In the swift revulsion of feeling, Ion felt himself grow faint. Lest he fall — so mighty was this tremor of returning hope — he grasped at the base of a near-standing pedestal.

As Ion strained his neck, to catch the first sight of the advancing boat, his wild eyes caught a glimpse of the statue above him. With a shout of delighted rapture Ion flung his arms about the divinity. His cry rang up. It was pæon and prayer in one.

"Beloved Eros! I take thy meaning — and thou shalt be duly worshipped. Oh son of that divinest of women be merciful! Since thou hast pierced our hearts, be thou our advocate! Let Aphrodite open her bright courts! Ah-h — he comes — I hear him! Thou art a god indeed!"

In the glad tumult of his joy, Ion had talked to the dear god as he might to a comrade. Eros' dimples seemed to deepen. Ion felt certain the palpable flutter—the divine presence was beating upon the air. What his eyes were beholding made every sense quiver with renewed lust of life.

Below the golden Arcadian hills, a boat and a man were slipping. The oars, in rythmical beat, swept the shallow waters. Persia's great eyes shone above his craft, the one moving, living feature of the still landscape.

Across the river Ion's shout rang out.

"You are alone! She is not—you have not found her?"

The hills echoed back the quiver of the sonorous Greek syllables, that seemed to turn to bronze, as they struck upon the air.

Persia's liquid speech carried along the carrying waters. "Yes — dear Master — she is waiting. She is close to the glen. I am to bring you!"

The oars splashed anew. Persia's skilled feathering made the drip, drip from the oar blades appear to repeat his sybillant phrases.

Along the hills, Ion's glad cry circled, to die in dim moonlit groves. Once more, he flung his arms about Eros' dimpled feet.

Presently, with Ion seated before him, Persia told his master how Maia had evaded detection. The household, as though solely to thwart her purpose had insisted on dragging her to a certain hill-slope, close to Pisa. From that elevation, certain features of the great Procession could, it

appeared, be watched. The women at least, could hear the louder hymns, and the shouting.

Maia had pled fatigue. As soon as the farm had been emptied, she had fled. For saftey's sake she was still hidden. In a certain grove, above Pisa, she had found enveloping thickets and many trees.

Ion was not wholly within his world, as he listened. Though every quick stroke bore him nearer—closer—it seemed long eternities until Persia turned the boat, until its keel struck along the smooth sands, to come to a rest.

At a bound, Ion was upon the shore. He recovered sufficient sanity, to shout back:—"Remember—there is not a moment to be lost. All is in readiness—Mago is returned—is awaiting you—to dress you: The signal—to-morrow—is to be a purple handkerchief—" He was running, as he cried the words. For Persia, disguised, was to keep Ion's place for him in the Stadion. A slave, Persia had no right to a place in the vast enclosure.

"I remember! And may the gods of thy fathers bless thee! For thou goest to mate with a divinity!" The first two words were in answer to Ion's command. The latter sentences were murmured in Arabic, to the stars. For Persia, though a slave, was also a man, and by birth he was a prince. He had carried into bondage a long inherited knowledge of the points of beauty in women.

Ion had not wandered far, before he found her. Maia was standing, or rather she was leaning, against a broad tree-trunk.

Motionless, pale with expectancy, her lips parted, Maia seemed a fixed, integral part of this world of gold. The wide branches above her shadowed her form. Yet so thick was the moonlight, Maia's shape, like a true divinity, was lighted from above.

As she stood, still, breathless, waiting, a glad exultant

cry burst from her lips. Yet Ion could not yet clasp—could not—scarce dared, to claim her embrace.

For Maia was changed. The Maia of the day before yesterday was gone. The look of the hetæræ was lost—and all semblance to those her sisters. This Maia had the state and the dignity of one nobly-born. A look of sweet chastity—such a mien as a maiden might wear who, like Hippodamia, was uplifting her bridal veil, in the nuptial chamber, shone from the pure, perfect features.

This look held Ion — it made him tremble. The woman he had come to capture — to kiss onward to quick bliss — this woman was no longer before him. The Maia who now leant forward, whose exquisite pallor imprinted a singular purity upon the quivering features — this Maia he scarce dared as yet claim.

It was Maia who drew her lover to her. And the third that had stepped between, she named, as their lips finally parted.

"Ah-h — you draw my very soul forth!" It was indeed this new-born, this heavenly spirit that seemed to take possession — to reveal itself, in wondrous ways, as though to show to Ion the immortal part of this lovely mortal he had won as his.

This birth of her soul had touched Maia with its divine imprint. The grosser elements had dropped away. Her beautiful face seemed purged of every earthly impurity. The moon's golden day showed it illumined, from within.

Maia's inward feeling was, that her soul seemed a bird, and this bird had suddenly found its voice—and sang. How delicious—this singing of one's soul! How its joyous notes harmonized the whole being. Surely never before, Maia said, low, in tremulous tones—as something of this she told to Ion—never before this moment had she truly lived. The dead part of her—that which hard

toil, and disappointment, and despair, had all but killed, was now alive.

The very intensity of her feeling lent its calm of sustained passionate exaltation, to Maia's every action. Gathering her scarf and an instrument of some sort to her arm, she stretched forth her hand. It was the compelling gesture a goddess might have used, in summoning a mortal lover to follow, where she led.

"Do you know the wood?" she asked. And she smiled, with adorable simplicity, into Ion's eyes, as though they had come solely to explore its beauty.

"No-—but lead on — Belovèd — you are one with it!
—your sisters, the woodland Oreades must be jealous —"

The music of Maia's laughter filled the still woods. Hand in hand they wandered on. Ion was content. For goddess though she seemed, yet was divine Maia mortal—and near.

A part of the night, indeed, did Maia seem. The chiton she had chosen was the short Doric one. Some threads of silver shone from out the clinging folds. Her high-placed girdle was, also, of shining silver. The slimness of her snowy ankles was outlined by bands of the same pure metal. At every turn of her rounded perfect shape, silvery rings circled about her, making her seem mysteriously engirdled with a something celestial — under divine protection of some loving god.

Something whiter than Maia shone out suddenly before them. An altar of snow, glistening in the moon's light, stood in their path. Above the altar, shrined in its marble niche, with his shapely fingers touching his lyre, Apollo's benign features beamed forth. His shrine was happily placed. A circle of tall firs and poplars surrounded it.

With light, swift impulse Maia swept below the god. With uplifted hands she was praying to him. The prayer was ended before Ion had reached her side.

"Shall I truly worship him? Would you care to see me dance?"

Before Ion's answer was whispered, Maia was circling the altar. She had opened the long filmy scarf that had been wound about her shoulders. Spreading it to its fullest extent, it took the rhythm and measure of her steps.

Ion drew in his breath. His delight in this new charm made a fresh joy leap up.

With the art of one who had been born and bred in the mysteries of the dance motion, Maia was circling the altar. Her steps were now wide, free, swift as wind; one of the Muses must step thus, when Apollo held his airy court, summoning his train. The fleecy mantle was a cloud out of which grew grace and symmetry;— the next instant the mortal was lost—a dim shadowy form was melting behind tree-trunks. When Maia emerged, a grave priestess, crowned and garlanded, moved slowly into the light, an Apolline hymn upon her lips.

Ion's ears were flooded with Maia's airy flight of song. As piously as she paced her steps, her new-born soul seemed escaping through her exquisite notes.

All the forest world bent to listen. The faint wind had died. Tree-branches and leaves were motionless. The drowsy night's hum of cicada, of rustling birds, was stilled. The very air seemed to hold its breath, lest one of the notes be lost.

Lark-like — pure yet impassioned, the hymn soared up to the golden sky vault.

Maia, her chiton lengthened by some mysterious process, wound and rewound her stately steps, about Apollo's altar.

Ion's ache of longing was suddenly, miraculously stilled. He slowed his steps — he breathed softly. His soul was flooded with delight. Maia's voice entered into it, penetrated the innermost recesses of his being. As he moved

toward her, scarcely daring to breathe, lest he lose a note, Ion felt a new rapture, a fresh wave of adoration. What ravishing trills! what a power of expression! what soulreaching sadness! what lark-like thrilling notes of joy!

When she had done, she trilled her notes close to Ion. The joyous hymn came to its finish, upon her lover's lips.

As suddenly as she had swung her voice aloft, as quickly she released herself. There seemed a dread of prolonging the embrace — of breaking the spell of the night.

"Come — dearest — I hear water coursing — I am athirst."

Once again she led him onward.

A murmuring stream was indeed flowing somewhere—its drowsy trickle pealed faint notes upon the stilled air.

This moment of quiet was the nightingale's chance. As though attempting to outrival Maia's trills, these choristers of the night burst forth. Maia and Ion moved on through the music-flooded grove.

Pan's goat-like features startled them, at a turn above the stream. He held his syrinx in between his long fingers. Thus sang he, all the livelong day and night, to this Arcadian rivulet.

"Oh—it is divine—every god is near! See—how he smiles!" and Maia threw her arms about the dear, mysterious deity. She leant her pliant grace, in loving fondness, against the base, as Ion bent to the stream to catch its silvery drops in a cup he had fashioned, out of a broad oak leaf.

When their thirst was assuaged, once more they took up their journey. The giant oaks, the towering firs, and the temple stillness of the night seemed awaiting them. The mounting hymn of their love sang upon the airy spaces; it breathed forth the echo of a love so perfect and complete, it scarce needed crowning.

- "Art happy as I am dear Ion?" Maia asked, her eyes raining joy.
- "I am indeed crowned at last, beloved," Ion murmured, drawing the dear shape closer.

After a moment he lipped —

- "Drink with me be young with me,
- "Love with me, be mad with my madness,
- "And I will be serious with you in your seriousness."

"Tis the cycle of life—of true love—it has always seemed to me. And that, you, alone, among all women, can be trusted to complete. Oh Maia! was there ever such a woman? Have others loved thus—been content, as we are, to walk on—and on?—But Oh!" he suddenly flamed, as, trembling he clutched Maia fiercely to him—

Gently, persistently, she held him away. As though there were an actual presence in this golden world, one to hold passion at bay, she whispered hurriedly, fearfully:—

"Hush-h — see — yonder lies Endymion. Step softly — We must not wake him —"

Through the opening of giant walnuts, Ion espied a wide grassy stretch. Maia was tip-toeing towards the lawn.

Upon the greensward, curled in sleep, lay the curved woolly forms of a sheep fold. In their midst, with his curls and face to the moon, a lad lay stretched, his staff beside him. In his rude young strength, his features wore a look of happy expectancy — for his lips were wreathed with a smile. The shepherd lad might, indeed, be he whom the chaste goddess had loved.

"Sh-h — stir not — I must kiss him — for Diana's sake," whispered Maia, a roguish light in her eyes.

Ion sprang forward. But he was too late, Light as air, Maia's kiss had fallen upon the boyish brow.

"Come! quick," Maia was crying, "he may awake!" And she clasped Ion's hand — she was speeding across the slope of the high grasses.

Once, indeed, she turned. And at what she saw, her crystal laughter burst upon the startled air.

For the shepherd had risen. He was sitting upright. His heavy sleep was still weighing down eyelids and senses. Yet he groped for his staff. And he was looking Diana's orb full in the face — as though the moon, at least, was to assure him he had not been dreaming.

"See how you have frightened the lad! Be contented — you have done mischief enough. Now sing me one more song — and —"

"Oh Ion," gasped Maia, cutting his words in two, "Tell me, dearest, dost know the great song — Sophocles' ode 'Great Unconquerable Love'?"

Ion nodded his affirmative. Maia then swept her arm upon her lover's shoulder. Walking thus, and singing together, Maia felt would make the last, the one perfect touch. The edifice of joy would then be all but complete.

"Then let us sing it. I will sing the strophe, and you join in the anti-strophe."

As though she had come, in some miraculous manner, to greet her worshippers, a rude shrine, with an early image of Aphrodite stood at their left. Insensibly both turned to stand before it. The goddess seemed to smile through over full, primitive-cut lips. Remote as was this her altar, other and quite recent lovers had left votive offerings. Fading garlands enwreathed the rude base, and upon the goddess's breast a rose lay.

Maia unbound her own lilies. Aphrodite wore now her white wreath. Before the mute mage, crowned, shedding sacrificial odours, the lovers stood silent, transfixed with emotion.

Then Maia held out her hand.

"Let us begin," she whispered.

Hand in hand they stood, before the divine image. Their voices rang up in sweet swelling unison.

"Mighty power, all powers above,
Great unconquerable love;
Thou who liest in the dimple sleek
On the tender virgin's cheek,
Thee the rich and great obey,
Every creature owns thy sway.
O'er the wide earth and o'er the main
Extends thy universal reign;
All thy maddening influence know,
Gods above and men below;
All thy powers resistless prove
Great Unconquerable Love!"

The first strophe was sung. Then they paused. Before beginning the anti-strophe, Maia moved, away from the altar. The cool dim forest—yonder—further and further away, seemed calling—its dark aisles were beckoning.

"Let us go — yonder — 'tis darker there,— Diana's rays cannot follow —" she whispered, as she leant her pliant shape to press the closer to her lover.

They moved onwards. The bright forest world was left behind. Giant trees, ivy-circled, had interwoven their lofty branches, shutting out the light. Cool, fresh wood scents swept the nostril. Tall shrubs, and herbacious weeds made close walls about them.

And this part of the forest was strangely still—remote—and secret.

Still singing, the lovers walked on. Then, as by common consent, they stopped, and their lips met, trembling as they met.

## Chapter XV

#### BEFORE THE RACE

For the few days that remained, before the time set for the chariot race, Ion felt himself to be living a hundred lives in one. From long before dawn until the dropping of the sun, he was standing, shouting, making extravagant bets, or shrieking, as victors or losers made of him alternately a winner or loser, in his turn.

From sunset to far into the night, he was feasting or giving a banquet. And his own race was drawing nearer and ever nearer.

And yet—yet—how through every moment of emotional excitement came the remembered ecstacy of Maia's touch—of the thrilling power of her melodious voice, of those moving tones—so deep—so tremulous—when she was quivering under the weight of strong feeling! What a divine woman to love! What a glorious moment of life to live—here at great Olympia—where even the poorest Greek felt himself to be treading on air! Never had Ion been so near to celestial heights of never-fading, never-ending sensation. Every varying phase of his intensified existence was a delirium worker.

The most beautiful woman in all Hellas loved him!

The most famous stallion in Olympia was his — was to bring victory to his car.

What could mortal ask more, of gods or men?

Yet, as the sun dropped, at the end of the long day—the last before the cars were to run, Ion had a very human, tremulous moment.

He and his father had bent their steps towards the stables. Here was a little world apart.

In and out of the stalls, close to the Hippodrome, grooms were busy exercising shining-coated horses. The air rang with the names of animals, of cities, and of contestants. Owners had come to look after the condition of their stallions, betting clerks had brought noted experts, whose private views would soon be made public, affecting the rise and fall of the betting.

Ion and his father were soon the centre of an animated circle. For the hundredth time, Ion gave to inquisitive strangers full particulars concerning his steeds. Ancestry, age, the races in which two of the stallions had already figured when as two-years old, they had won at the Nemæan festival, in the horse race—the superior merits of Pollox to all three of his "four," as well as to all other stallions sent by any other contestant to this Olympiad—these inexhaustible topics for heated argument, refutation, demonstration, and courteous affirmation, Ion rehearsed again and again.

For the last time, in as hot an aside as when he had stated his doubts, for the first time, to his father, Ion had whispered, with narrowed, anxious eyes: "I distrust Porus. The Theban has a villainous look. I have cautioned Xenias to have the stallions watched. Porus, I feel certain, would be capable of any low trick."

"Poison — is that in your mind?" cried Crates, clasping his hands in affright, his voice trembling with emotion.

"That, or worse. The Theban has his eye on Pollux—he knows where his true rival is—see him, now, as he eyes darkly the animal's steps. If one were superstitious—"

"Nonsense, Ion — you are as foolish as a woman. Remember the symptoms of our last sacrifice — how favoura-

ble was every one. Why, even that Egyptian soothsayer at the Fair—"

"Who is foolish now — father? Do you really believe the flesh of a goat can reflect the will of the gods? Or that, by the burning of strange lights and unguents, the future is made clear to us?" Bitter as were Ion's words of unbelief, his tone was gentle, for his eyes were now on his beautiful stallion. His true belief was centred there—in those iron muscles, in those quick, sensitive nerves, in the glorious haunches and the perfect head, lit by the fiery eyes.

Ion's sceptical outburst shook Crates. An inward, shrinking tremor possessed him. Suppose the gods should be hovering near! What sacrifice could he offer, to propitiate their favor? Crates' terrified expostulations were checked by the coming of Timoleon and Glaucus.

Fresh from the porticoes of the stadium, they brought the very latest news.

"The betting is even — few odds are given," cried Glaucus, with flushed cheek and eyes aflame. "It is one to ten on Thebes, and one and a fraction on your car — Ion, dear boy."

Glaucus' tone was one of excitement; yet Ion felt its accents sensibly lacking in that passionate espousal of his own venture, every contestant longs to hear, in a friend's voice.

"One would think you were betting on both cars—my Glaucus," Ion said, his bitter note again in the ascendant. Racing breeds strange distempers, in the best of men.

"As indeed I am!" lisped Glaucus, throwing back his light mantle, with a flourish, as he sent his eyes abroad. "I am wise—my boy—I straddle my bets. Why—see what I won by my wisdom—in yesterday's cock-fight. That Syracusan was ruined, while, I by dividing my bets,

won a pile of drachmæ." Glaucus' face was fairly ablaze with the memory of his triumph. He felt himself to be the wisest of men, in all things connected with races and bets. No one, on the ground, he felt absolutely certain, could prophecy the failure or success of the cars as could he.

The three young men were standing just outside of the stalls. Ion's "four" were in the open—their grooms were exercising them. All three men's eyes had been centred on Pollux. Every step the animal took showed the perfection of his condition. His eyes were bright, were bristling with intelligence; the small sensitive ears turned like weathercocks, at every breeze of change; the glossy coat sheathed nerves as quick to act as a woman's; and the free, long, even strides that made running seem easier than walking, revealed the iron muscles and flexible tissues. Pollux was a horse, indeed, to rouse in any horse-lover a pardonable enthusiasm. Glaucus, in his heart, believed none other could match him.

Ion's lips, during Glaucus' outburst, had curled with undisguised contempt. Glaucus' innate meanness, the real smallness of his nature, were fully revealed to Ion, and for the first time. To feel passionately lends lightning vision; and Ion, in this, the crowning event of his life, looking for support among his nearest friends, guaged Glaucus in one swift judging. A man who would not be true in such a moment, Ion cried, in smothered rage, to his beating heart — but Timoleon was talking.

"You made an excellent beginning — my Glaucus — but a lame ending. See — here's Ion — amiable and charming as he is — he'll never forgive you." Timoleon's eyes were fairly dancing with laughter. It was always a banquet to his humourous sense, to witness men making an exhibition of themselves, proving their dulness by their ignorance of results. He, having no love for Glaucus, was delighted to

see him exhibiting his folly. Ion, likewise, was showing his weakness by his anger at Glaucus' treachery. Yet, what else was to be looked for, in as fluid a nature?

Glaucus, meanwhile, had mounted a flush. He had a dim vision that his frankness had, perhaps, not been in the best possible taste. And taste was to Glaucus what religion is to the pious.

"Nonthenth!" he always affected a thicker lisp than common, when embarrassed. "Ion knows well I was but joking. Why, who indeed could look at such a horse as Pollux—yonder—and not know where victory lay? Such a horse would draw owls out of the meanest of men. I—as everyone knows, shall be half ruined if Ion fails to be crowned," his tone was almost tremulous, for his statement was almost wholly true.

Glaucus moved towards Ion, to fling a loving arm about his friend. His smile was really full of warmth as he met Ion's melting look.

Ion, in truth, could not long bear resentment. The touch of his frost had passed. He clasped Glaucus' hand as it hung over his shoulder.

Advancing, he bore Glaucus onward.

And yet — and yet — Glaucus' voice, assuredly, did not ring true!

"Ye gods above, and all ye in the nether world!" cried Ion, later, when, once more he was alone, Timoleon and Glaucus having suddenly remembered an engagement to meet a friend in the Altis—whom they were to conduct to Phidias' studio—"Is there, in all this wide world, a dependable man? Even the best of friends wear a full suit of armour—one must guess at the real face worn behind the shield!"

On his way to his tent, Ion sighed, as he made the above philosophic reflection. Men revealed, indeed, strange qualities in stalls of a hippodrome! Horses brought secrets to light the most intimate intercourse failed to reveal. Well—he would know the worst and the best, in a few short hours! The night to pass—and at dawn, on the morrow, his fate would be sealed!

# Chapter XVI

#### THE CHARIOT RACE

On the following morning, long before dawn, the slipping of thousands of naked and sandalled feet, hurrying over stone seats, or pressing through the entrance aisles of the hippodrome struck the ear. The bustle and stir of the multitude, the roar of laughter, the coarse jests, the neighing of the horses, their kicking and plunging, and the yells of the hucksters, without the huge enclosure, made an ever increasing confusion of sound.

In the purple dusk, the stars hung low, golden balls of light.

The dawn presaged its coming by the refreshing coolness of its breath. Fragrant airs swept up and through the valleys and river bed. Night went out in illumined serenity of skies that only parted with their paling glory to wear Aurora's splendour.

With the sharp suddenness of dawn, peculiar to Hellas, the day brightened and all was made clear.

The breaking day showed the elliptical immensity of the Hippodrome to be already packed. The terraced seats curving about the prow-shaped enclosure, were sheeted in white. Garlanded heads rose above festival robes. Statues and statute-like forms showed bronzed and tinted skins. Hasty toilettes were being made. Gemmed fingers swept tangled locks to rights; beards were caressed into shape, and garlands were straightened, or fresh ones brought forth.

Those who were already awake were noisy. These laughed and joked. Many were playing tricks on their

neighbours. Those still huddled in the coil of sleep, were kept from sitting in too comfortable a posture; others were doing their best to make such as had brought a store of goodly provisions, share them with those who had brought none, but were quick with their fingers.

"Figs — Figs — fresh figs!" "Garlands — roses — wreaths — garlands for all!" "Honey cakes, sweet honey cakes! Who'll buy my home-baked cakes?" "Here's Chian and fresh water! here's Rhodian — who is thirsty? Here's wine and cool water!"

Such were the tantalizing cries of vendors crowding about the entrance to the Hippodrome, that rang up to madden the ears of those who had not forestalled this critical moment, by bringing the necessary provisions. For the Hippodrome interior was freed from the shrill voices of competitive petty hucksters.

Crates, with Nirias beside him, was among those who had carried full baskets. Having sat in his seat since midnight, Crates had the hunger of a tired man. Nirias had managed to sleep on through most of the long slow shades.

As Crates moved, to make a better table of his knees, a gathering growl below his feet made him lift his eyes from his bread and honey. A coarse voice was sounding threatening notes.

"Hey — you — look out, I say! What are your elbows doing on my back? Is it a signal for a trial throw, my friend?"

As the shoulders bent backward, and the huddled shape came to an upright, Crates stopped his munching. For a single instant, he felt his breath indrawn. The man's form, as it towered forth out of the dawn, rose up like a mighty column.

He must, in his youth and best manhood, have been a famous boxer. Both his ears were crushed. Some straight

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home-thrusts had marred his features to the jumble athletes gloried in, one that proved them the heroes of a hundred battles and victories.

As Crates caught a closer glimpse of his man, he smiled. With a quick gesture, he put his hand to his girdle; he took out some coins. He had seen old athletes before. He knew their quick tempers, and also how to quiet them.

"There — there — my friend, I owe you my excuses. Here's my way of proving it to you." And Crates put a jingling mass of owls into the man's open palm.

"Well," the giant laughed, with a pleased grunt, "I accept your excuses, and I like your manner of rendering them. Here, you! Here, some breakfast for a rich man!" The monster clincked his coins in the teeth of a neighbour near by, who was sharing some cakes and figs, with a friend.

The crowd laughed, and looked for the end. And the and came quickly. "Ah-h, you will not? You prefer to play the benefactor?" The athlete grinned unpleasantly, as he leant across a lap or two. "Those figs, my friend, if you please."

The knotty fingers seemed scarcely to have touched the man's lean hand, and the fig was already lifted to his lip. Yet the fig dropped as though the hand of him who held it had suffered a lightning stroke. Those laughed loudest who had brought no breakfast. Having won his audience, the athlete proposed to play up to it.

"And you, yonder, your cake takes my fancy!" he cried. The man holding the honeycakes thought fit to put one beyond the reach of those terrible fingers. Before the cake was fairly between his teeth, he felt the world turn and his jaw lock. He was sitting in a heap, with empty hands, and a feeling of tightness and pain about his face.

The crowd shrieked its delight at such rough play. Sorry

indeed must be the joke that did not evoke delighted laughter at dawn, from the waiting thousands in the Hippodrome. The scarred face of the athlete, eating another man's breakfast, with an innocent look, was the kind of jest peculiarly to the taste of Olympian pilgrims.

Into the midst of the shouting, rocking, shrieking crowd, Ion passed from the outer stalls, to take up his place in the contestant's stand. His own excitement all but benumbed him. The tumult about him, like the warmth and brilliancy of the full day, soothed, his shaking limbs. Once he had faced the great crowd, and the white chill of his over-mastering anxiety passed from him, as by miraculous command.

Out of the hundreds of faces pressing above and about him, Timeleon's and Glaucus' countenances shone forth, wreathed with smiles. They had cleverly edged their way close to the stoa—they stood almost within the privileged place.

Ion's appearance was the signal for joyful greetings.

"Here he is!—here he is!" cried Timoleon. Never had Ion seen his friend as elated—as stirred with excitement. Timoleon seemed proud to have captured him, to have as distinguished a contestant to acclaim as friend.

"Cool as a morning in Thrace — by all the Powers!" lisped Glaucus, as he slanted his eyes, looking Ion's freshness over as he might a woman's. "Enviable creature, to show such eyes — thus to face your fate!"

Other eyes than those of his friends were upon Ion. Wherever he looked, he met curious, eager, devouring glances. A buzzing of tongues about him whispered his name, the name also of Xenias, of his horses, of the stud farm, and of his own birthplace. Those whose information was the most precise were eagerly listened to. He heard bets made that startled, and yet delighted his ears. Every

sense seemed to have been doubled, to have greatly intensified its sensory powers. It was even sweet to feel his own breath upon his lip. It came, like the warmth of the growing day, fragrant, yet pulsing with heat.

While the course was being swept and freshly raked, Ion had time to respond to the greetings and signals from friends in the nearer seats.

"Greeting — dear boy — dear son, I may say!" cried Critias, a distinguished Athenian, attempting to stretch forth his white hand, over a dozen heads and shoulders.

"I say, dear old man — why are you not mad — just a little frenzied? Dost feel the swelling rapture of all this?" And Glaucus swung his arm towards the heaving, shouting, cursing, staring crowds, filling every inch of the Hippodrome's space.

Ion straightened himself; he tucked his forefingers in his jewelled girdle. Looking straight before him, and at the terrible, yet most fascinating of all the objects in that immense ellipse,—he set his eyes and fixed them on the Taraxippos.

"I am, perhaps, feeling it all so deeply, my Glaucus, I feel naught. I can only be sensible of one thing—of that awful Taraxippos—of its horror, and wondering how my stallions will pass it."

As a woman might move near to comfort a sister, in suffering, Glaucus crept close to Ion. "Neither you nor I, dear Ion," he whispered, "can imagine fiery Pollux as lying beneath the wreck of chariots. See — yonder — your father waves!"

As Ion returned, gaily, Crates' frantic salute, he managed to clasp his friend's hand. Never, he felt, had he loved him as now.

"Perhaps, dear man, I am indeed mad — perhaps the frenzy is upon me. God! how long will it be before the

trumpet sounds?" Ion looked towards the judges' stand with staring eyes, and then his trained eyes swept the course.

In the now bright daylight, the whole course lay bared to the light. Each and every feature of the famous ellipse was clearly to be seen.

In the axis of its length, ran the long dividing barrier. At one end stood an altar. At the farther end, on its tall column, uprose the dreaded Taraxippos. This latter, "The Terror of Horses," would show the awful mask that would strike to terrified trembling, or would throw into a panic of fear, each and every one of the competing stallions.

The lower end of the Hippodrome was filled with the celebrated stall-arrangement—the Aphesis. This was a prow-shaped enclosure, that projected into the course. The contestants must draw for position.

It had been Ion's bad luck to draw one of the worst of all the stalls. His place came at the very end — next to the last stall. But he and his driver had had time to work out a plan to make this bad stroke of luck help rather than spoil their play for position.

All eyes were now fixed, with signs of growing impatience, on the altar that stood in the centre of the Aphesis. An eagle was hidden within this altar. Worked by invisible springs, when the eagle uprose, to spread its wings, a bronze dolphin, placed in full view at the very tip end of the prow-shaped compartment, would be seen to sink earthwards. This downward plunge was the signal for the beginning of the race.

The goal was in the very centre of the barrier, marked by a statue of Hippodamia. The judges' stand was placed directly opposite.

As his cry had burst from him, Ion felt the cold sweat break. This physical chill was the sign of the pulsing flame within. His brain seemed a ball of fire; every nerve pricked, and his whole frame tingled with the sense of overmastering emotion. He seemed to be living a dozen lives in as many instants. The consciousness of this intensified existence was still further heightened by the contagion of the mounting excitement of the mighty throng. Their cries and oaths, the laughter that seemed strangely hard, unnatural, their stampings, and impatient clapping made the air vibrant with frenzied human feeling.

A single trumpet note suddenly stilled the clamour to breathless quiet. For the great moment had come.

After the herald had sounded his notes, thousands of eyes were fixed upon the bronze dolphin. Out of the stillness the pawing of the still invisible stallions, their snortings and plungings, the sharp cries of charioteers, and the clanguer of metallic grinding rose up to whet to keener edge the passion of the waiting throng.

The dolphin had now sunk to earth. The eagle had spread its wings.

At the instant of the bird's soaring flight above the whitened altar, came the clincking rattle of loosening chains. A crunching of wheels, the dash of steeds in spirited action, and forth from their stalls first one chariot and then another was seen to leap into view.

For less than a breath, the cars then stood in line.

Then the rope fell. And a thunderous roar rose up from the throng that shook the very hills.

"They are off! They are off!" Ion heard Timoleon and Glaucus and other thousands of voices shouting. "Yes, they are off," Ion echoed, not knowing that he was whispering and not shouting. For now the race had begun, blurred senses—even blurred vision had come.

Yet he knew, in some dull blind way, the course to be one blaze of bronze. The sun beat fiercely on the shining polished wheels; the intense rays flashed upon golden bits, the bright reins seemed long lines of light, and the short tunics of the charioteers, filled with air, made whiter or browner the knotty sinewy calves, the muscular arms, and the bending of the straining necks. Yet more and more, horses, cars, and charioteers were becoming one whirling indistinguishable mass.

Little by little, however, Ion made out the position of each one of the favorites.

The Syracusan, famous for his perfectly matched white stallions that had already a hard-won victory to their credit, no longer ago than last year, at Delphi,—this dark-eyed young charioteer had won the prize stall. Forth from the very top of the prow he had shot. Directly in line with the inside track, the Syracusan had swept his four close to the inner edge of the barrier.

Ion's most dangerous rival, Porus, had managed to swing his beautiful car, with its superb Thessalian steeds, close beside the Sicilian.

Next in turn came Corinth's quadriga driven by a noted charioteer with a dozen victories already won.

Several less sensationally equipped cars came in between a new-comer — a fiery eyed young Arabian, with stallions, small, slender-limbed, who stepped as lightly as a summer breeze blows, and who ran, quick as light, at a word from their youthful driver.

Xenias held the outside edge. But those who watched, might have seen how cleverly this most wary of all the charioteers crept up at every plunge of his fiery yet easily managed "four."

As Ion had caught sight of the Theban car his heart had seemed to die within him.

The perfection of its running gear, its lightness and strength, the perfect mating of the Thessalian steeds, their mingled fire and gentleness, and the superb ease and freedom of Porus' driving, made Ion almost confess the race already won. A wild hot wave of agonized fear rose up:—could Xenias thus control Æolean's fiery temper? Would the other trace-horse answer to the curb as did Porus' steeds?

And then Ion felt the whole earth turn. For his car was being cheered.

Cries and shouts of resounding applause greeted its appearance. Ion came back to life. All he distinctly felt or saw was that, if anything, his dear Xenias had his "four" in even firmer hand than had his rival his restive steeds. His own four stepped as one. The car rolled as though upon a silken carpet.

Suddenly, a great shout rose up.

"Ah-h — See! Look! By the gods almighty, but one is down already!"

Above the whirring tumult of the rushing chariots, a dull, ominous crash broke upon the ear. The sound of breaking timber and crushed bronze, of horses' cries of rage and fear, and a driver's maddened roar were drowned by the long groan that burst from the shrieking, contemptuous crowd.

Hisses, curses, cries of "Coward!" "Fool!" "Muledriver!" and worse were yelled by those whose money was on the fallen car. Crushed and splintered lay the Achæan car against the inner sides of the course. The horses had fallen as the car struck. The driver was making frantic efforts to get them upon their feet.

But the wrecked car was quickly forgotten. For the remaining eleven were flying past, in the fury of the steeds' first heat. Thousands of eyes followed the now swaying figures of the charioteers. Brown, lustrous arms, limbs and necks shone with the glitter of perfect health; the grace and firm stand of the drivers, within the rocking cars, the

floating streamers flying out, stiffened and straight, the reins high held, the splendid picture held every eye spell bound.

On and on the cars swept, and the shouts of the bettors followed their course. Voices were heard shouting —

- "The Syracusan still holds his place!"
- "Wait till he passes the Terror!"
- "A hundred to anything he does!"
- "Ten to one the Theban cuts in!"

Shrieking, yelling, groaning, the vast white crowd swayed as did the charioteers, rocked by the frenzy of the mounting excitement.

Then an instant's lull came, in the tempestuous clamour. For the Taraxippos was all but reached.

The Syracusan was seen to gather his reins with nervous grasp. His neighbour, the Theban, who, from the start had been neck and neck with his four, swerved, slightly, to the right, to give his car a wider swing. This effort was quickly checked, for the Corinthian charioteer closed in, pressing Porus to perilous closeness against the shining Syracusan wheels.

With a curse that cut the air, Porus took his revenge by crowding the Syracusan to the danger point at the very moment the latter's steeds first caught sight of the dreaded mask.

The "horror," the terror of horses had risen; its hideous features loomed forth with the demoniac unexpectedness of a supernatural apparition.

As the awful mask lifted its leering face, a blast from an invisible trumpet shook the air.

The crisis of panic was upon the horses. The on-rushing speed of every car was suddenly checked. The terrorized shrieks of stallions rent the air. Some plunged and kicked; others, becoming utterly unmanageable, sped with frenzied fear past the Terror, to collide with other cars whose charioteers were bent double over their reins, in their maddened effort to regain control of their frightened steeds. Crash after crash announced the dreaded, yet expected disaster, of the ruin of half the chariots that had entered the lists. The wrecks of crushed cars and of kicking fallen horses were now added to the difficulties that must be met and surmounted, by those who had survived the awful test.

After the first shiver of affright, the Syracusan was seen still to hold his position. His four had been startled, had plunged and shown symptoms of panic. But the charioteer's iron wrist and cheering shouts had all but produced their effect. He still lead the race, but Porus, whose nigh trace horse had emitted a shriek of terror, pricked the animal with his goad, as, with masterly skill, he swung his car to the right, a clearer space having been yielded by the simultaneous rearing of the Syracusan pole horses.

With a shout and a yell of triumph, Porus sent his own four, at furious speed, across the course from right to left. He had used the maddened terror of his horses to gain position. Their fright lent them wings of flame. He crossed the Syracusan's axle pole by a bare inch. But he crossed it.

Porus now led the race.

This brilliant manœvre won frantic applause. Porus ran his four now, to the ringing music of intoxicating applause.

He felt the race to be his.

For his animals were well in hand. They ran with the fury of thoroughbreds whose Thessalian racing blood was fully fired.

The Syracusan, Porus knew, however, was once more close beside him.

And Xenias, he instinctively felt, rather than saw, was executing some dangerous feat of skill. For the crowd was now shouting "The Piræan!" "The Piræan!" Even as

he bent over his reins, Porus heard, above all the clamorous fury of the rushing cars, extravagant bets cried out on the Piræan favourite.

Ion's aching eyes, at last, descried Xenias' floating streamers. His car had been held with rigid steering close to the wall, away from the awful horror. This point had been agreed upon, from the very first. Xenias was not to strive for place, he was to hold in the team, until the Taraxippos had been past—at least once. After the worst had been tested, once the team had become used to facing the awful terror, and the wrecks sure to encumber this end of the course could be reckoned with, then and then only, was Xenias to put his gallant four to their speed.

"He holds back! Xenias is holding back!" cried Glaucus, in wild frenzy, as his trained eyes caught sight of the trick.

"Yes," replied Ion, a huge sigh of relief bursting from him, "Yes, he holds in his steed — see — he is turning now — the four are actually facing the Taraxippos."

With a mastery of the moment even Ion had not believed his driver capable of displaying, Xenias had let the Theban, the Syracusan and the Corinthian, who had managed to get their terrified steeds past the Terror—he allowed them to pass his car.

Deliberately, he drove his stallions close to the terror of horses. Tightening his rein on the nigh horse, he gave Pollux his head. With a prick of his goad, he brought the beautiful creature face to face with the dreaded mask.

Pollux stared, started, trembled. His fear was instantly communicated to his mates. The four were now frantically plunging, wild with mingled terror and the novel sensation of palzied inaction. As one, the four reared. The car was all but overturned.

"Ah-h. By the great god —'tis going! No, he has them

still in hand! he's pulling, for all his might — Ion — Ion — he'll master them yet! he'll do it! By all the heavenly powers, what is he now attempting to do?"

Xenias was performing a feat far more wonderful than merely to get his four well in hand. For the Corinthian and the Syracusan, in swinging about the upper end of the barrier, had lost ground. Quick as light Xenias was over his horses' back, his cheers and cries calling to each to do his utmost. He cut across the Syracusan's pole, at the very moment when the charioteer was busy in goading his rebellious off-horse to do his best work. He had left the Corinthian a whole length behind.

Xenias' masterly play for position had won. He and Porus were now leading the race.

And Ion was tasting his first sip of rapture.

For the air was split, rent, pierced with praise of Xenias. Sixty thousand eyes were fixed on the charioteer's bent shoulders, on his set, obstinate jawed face, on the beautiful steeds now once more in perfect step, rounding the course with lightning speed.

Round and round they rushed, Porus and Xenias neck and neck, with the Corinthian, the Syracusan, and the Libyan once more disputing for place at every turn in the course. The five surviving cars were swinging as one, about the altar end of the barrier.

"Hey! Corinth! at you! at you — you fiend!" cried the Sicilian. Then his hoarse laugh, senseless, brutalized with mounting madness, was shrieked to the suddenly quieted air. For the crowd had stilled its voice to listen for the coming tragedy that now rocked upon the silence.

The Sicilian's madness was as a gathering ecstasy. He felt the Hippodrome his — for one glorious moment.

"Ha-a! you hound! you come, do you? You'll bite the dust, then, for by the pest of the furies I'll drive you to

hell!" And with the cry of one rushing to glory, he locked wheels with the Corinthian.

The shrill crash of splintering wheels, the thud of the cars as they rode to destruction, and the agonized cries of the Corinthian rose above the terrorized equine shrieks.

And the crowd shivered and felt the sweet, delicious thrill of chilly horror. For the two wrecked chariots lay directly in the very middle of the course.

"By Zeus in Heaven! but Xenias can never pass! There's no room. I tell you there's no room!" Ion was beside himself. He was screaming his fear. For he, as well as the Hippodrome audience now saw, with the wrecked chariots directly in the course, the space between the barrier and the fallen cars was all too narrow for the competing cars to pass.

All three, Porus and Xenias, close to the inner track, and the Libyan, were now running neck and neck. They were rounding the course, for the tenth time. They were nearing the chariot-wrecks that lay in the middle of the course.

Men, above upon the stone seats, could be heard sucking in their breath; some laughed — foolishly; a few emitted hoarse cries. But the proof of the multitude's overmastering emotion was felt, rather than heard; they leant over, craning necks and stretching bodies forth, with eyes that had the look of men on the brink of some fearful personal tragedy.

"Ah!" "Zeus!" "Ye heavenly powers!" "He'll do it! I tell you he will!" "Ten thousand to one hundred he won't!" "The Libyan!" "The Libyan!" "Piræus look out—he's gaining, he's—"

Then a fearful cry rang up.

"Oh-h-h!" The long groan that swept from the hot lips of swaying thousands was the mighty dirge that sang the Theban to earth.

For Porus, as he had gathered his reins to pull in his four—he led Xenias by half a length—found his pole horses terrorized at the sight of the still kicking, plunging stallions, caught in the ruin of the overturned chariots. His pole suddenly shot up in air; and the pole horses with it; the off trace-horse swerved madly to the left, close to the wreck, and the splendid Thessalian chariot overturned and went to pieces, its left wheel crashing the two wheels that lay just beside the nearest wrecked car.

The long, loud wail burst to gather anew into prolonged, resounding groans. The fame of the Thessalian steeds, Porus' many-times proven skill, together with the beauty of the chariot and the enormous losses the ruin of the first favourite would bring to thousands, made Porus' tragedy the chief disaster of the great race. Men turned pale. Ruin stared many a Theban in the face; and every Thessalian's soul went down to the uttermost depths of despair with the fall of the splendid venture. Some sobbed, others tore off garlands, and others struck at their breasts as the tears streamed. For the Thessalian thousands gathered upon the seats, the day was going down in utter blackness.

In the loud uproar, scarce a shout was to be heard. Until, presently, at the eleventh rounding, a particularly masterly movement on the part of the Libyan, gave the crowd a fresh sensation.

Xenias, as Porus had fallen, had pushed his four to their utmost speed. The Libyan was now his sole rival. On passing the obstructing wreck, the Libyan held back. He swerved, with cool deliberation, to the right. He gave rein to the off trace-horse, and reined in, with fierce grasp, his nigh stallion. After passing the crushed chariots on the outer edge of the course, close to the uprising of the Hippodrome wall, he was seen, for the first time to lean over. His young, flushed face was stretched far forward, over

the four plunging stallions. And he spoke to them, gently, calling each by name, in the tongue strange to Greek ears; and the stallions answered. With a single bound they cleared the space, rounding the upper end of the barrier where leered the Terror. They passed the horror without turning a white hair. A simultaneous spurt of speed, and they had crossed Xenias' axle pole!

The Libyan led the race!

The thunderous shouts that rose up to the skies, seeemed to rock the very hills. On and up the thunder rolled. The horses from the desert heard the mad pæon of rapture. They settled down to their work of rounding the last heat with eyes that blazed fire, with stretching necks, and deep breath.

The air rang now as loud with bets as it had with frantic applause.

"A thousand dradmæ to ten he'll keep the lead!"

"Two thousand that he won't!" Ion thought, but in his white fear he could not be sure, that he heard his father's voice. Whoever it was Glaucus took up the bet. "Ten thousand that the Libyan wins!"

The deep roar of the shouting multitude engulfed the answer. For Xenias had performed a prodigy of skill.

After losing his place, his one thought had been to make up in speed what he had lost in position. With his four still in perfect hand, and working beautifully, he steered close to the Libyan. There lay scarce an inch of space between their whirling wheels. The eight horses' heads and haunches were so near a level, a child might have leapt from back to back. Xenias did not urge his steeds; there was still the Terror and the wreck to pass, and the altar at the upper end of the course, before the last final curve was to be made — before the goal was passed.

On and on, neck and neck, the two cars ran. They had

passed the awful genii, where the wrecks were piled high; where cars, crushed to bits, broken harnesses and stallions were piled in intricable masses.

One more danger lay between both, and victory. In another instant the competing charioteers were before it.

The mass of the Corinthian and Syracusan wreck must now be passed — must be met, at perilously close quarters.

Xenias, as the sixty thousand bending, agonized, enraptured on-lookers perceived, intended to keep his place. He was pulling his four together preparatory to driving his car between the Libyan and the fallen chariots. His practiced eye had calculated the space; with his skill in steering he could do it! But there would not be an inch to spare.

The whole vast audience now stood upon their feet. Every eye was fixed, and each man felt his breath upon his lip. For there was impending tragedy in the very air. Porus was about to furnish an incident never before seen in the Hippodrome.

As he lay, squeezed tight between two wheels, he had seen the light of victory in Xenias' eyes.

Porus peered forth. The moment was propitious. Porus proceeded to crawl forth from between wheels and traces. At the very instant of Xenias' flight past his ruin, Porus lifted his fallen goad. He smiled, joyously, as might one in delirium, at re-capturing a toy. But as he lifted the torture instrument, he cunningly managed to point its murderous end outward.

As Xenias flew past, the goad caught in his out-blown tunic. The goad held good; its sharp point dug deep into the coarse garment's light-texture.

In an instant Xenias had been flung out of his car, and the Theban had dropped. His kicking horses were better than to meet the rage of that flame-lit face. But the car had kept on! The eight horses still were neck and neck. And there was such a little, such a very short way to run, before the column of Hippodamia was to be reached.

As Pollux had felt his driver drop, and the reins flap, he had turned. His fierce eyes appeared to take in the situation.—

He sprang to his work like one possessed, but one full, also, of a mighty purpose. The near pole horse showed signs of breaking. Pollux tossed his head, gave the beast a knock, as he plunged onward. Raising his noble head, with a snort he increased his speed. The others seemed willing to be led.

The car was now a good head's length ahead. But the Libyan's Arabians were pressing close — now they gained a little — now they lost.

"By the gods of luck!" shouted Glaucus, "I believe he'll do it." He was beside himself — he hugged Ion without knowing it.

Ion felt himself suddenly frozen with a strange calm.

"Yes, I agree with you - I think he will -"

"Provided only he passes the goal at that pace."

"The goal at that pace"—Ion heard himself faintly echoing.

Then the mighty thunder of sixty thousand shouting voices rocked the very earth. It rolled on and on—it broke only to begin anew.

For Xenias was, also, proving his mettle. He was seen running, for dear life. He ran like an athlete. He had crossed the track, while all eyes had been fixed on wonderful Pollux. He was making unheard-of time, as he rushed towards the goal.

Ion's heart, and the hearts of thousands of that suddenly silenced crowd, stopped beating.

"He intends to head them off," cried Timoleon.

"He intends"—Then Ion heard a deafening roar in his ears. Yet he was able to remember, quite distinctly, having seen Xenias race once, in full armour, on the beach, at Phalerum, against Glaucus' famous four. Dazed, weakened with the long strain, Ion could not now clearly see his racing charioteer.

Yet, there he was, panting, breathless. He had done his stint in unrecorded swiftness of time.

Just beyond the goal, indeed, Xenias stood waiting—what was he waiting for? Why, in God's name, did he not make a dash for the car?

Then—"The horse! The horse! Long live Pollux!" came like crashing thunder with long reverberating roll—from the crowd. For the crowd was gone mad.

And Ion woke up.

As out of a dream he had seen Pollux tearing ahead, keeping the lead. The Libyan was close beside — was within half a length. He was over the haunches of his dashing Arabians, whose swiftness was now like the wind.

For a single, awful moment the two cars were side by side. The eight stallions were eight maddened racers, each conscious the great moment was theirs to win or lose.

The vast crowd hung as one man, breathless, gasping—too far gone in an ecstasy of rapt excitement to shout.

Then, as all looked, Pollux was seen to toss his spirited head — he drew the team on — he made a frantic plunge forward —

He had passed the Libyan — He was half a head's length beyond!

The crowd had found its voice. Pollux was called to, was cursed, was blessed, was acclaimed as though he were a deity made mortal, racing to divine honours.

Did Pollux hear? He held his lead. A second spurt, and he had passed the Goal!

The race was his!

Scarcely had he passed the Judges' stand, when he found Xenias beside the car. The charioteer gathered the reins in his firm wrists just as they were falling about Æolean's feet.

As Xenias sprang into his car, as he grasped the ribbons, such a thunderous roar burst forth as shook the very hills. The over-wrought crowd shouted, wept, sang,—men clasped strangers to their breasts, and others tore their garlands to fling them down, hoping to crown Xenias, as he made the tour of the course.

The Herald was now sounding his trumpet, and for a moment the roar of applause died down.

Who would be acclaimed? Would it be the car or the horse? When "Pollux" was melodiously voiced, the multitude went into fresh raptures.

As the beautiful car passed before the judges' stand, Ion saw his father sway, and those beside him upheld him. Joy had overwhelmed him.

Ion made his way as best he could, through the ever gathering sea of faces, of pressing, obstrusive figures. He answered as well as he could, the ringing shouts, the applause, the almost loving salutations of men whose faces were those of strangers.

At last he stood beside his car. Those who were crowding about the victorious quadriga made way for its owner to come nearer.

As though he felt his dear Master's nearness, Pollux turned his head. His quickened breath was still lifting the round belly, and the beautiful eyes glowed with fiery flame. But as they met Ion's, Pollux seemed to send his dumb soul through the blazing orbs.

## 194 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

With an irresistable, overwhelming impulse, Ion flung himself forward. In an instant he had his arms about his beloved winner. He lay, sobbing, upon the moist shoulder. Pollux moved his head. He sent his warm breath upon his Master's neck, for his reward was come to him.

## BOOK III - ATHENS

## Chapter XVII

### A MARRIAGE PROJECT

A MONTH later, the Piræan Port and its three harbours were astir with life and motion. Through the great gates in the walls, the sea sparkled and spoke.

Ships slipped from out their moorings; their sails' snowy whiteness, and the browns, blues, and tan-coloured shrouds of smaller craft cast long trails of colour across the violet-blue waters.

Such pictures, bristling with motion, were framed in stone. Flanked by their tall square towers, the double gates showed to the sea their fortified strength.

Aloft, the hills arose, on either side, sloping to the plain whereon mighty Athens and its Port lay cradled, as though rocked by the chorusing hills.

Across the shore, beyond the sea, azure blue, the gauzy hills of Argolis hung like filmy draperies, stretched against the golden tinted horizon. And wherever the eye rested, temples and statues of the gods uprose, rosy, bloom-touched, in the pink of the morning glow.

A world of men was gathered in the Agoras, and under the colonnades. Shrieks, calls, and yells made a deafening confusion of sound. Local and foreign deities were invoked, in every known tongue and dialect, to bless a bargain, to be witness to truth, and to visit immediate punishment were not the maker of a vow to fulfil the same.

Busy as was the scene, a sudden lull came. To the cries

and yells of buyers and of officials, there succeeded that peculiar hush that announces, in a crowd, the hearing of news. Groups were formed, and men stumbled over each other to listen.

Suddenly, a shout rang out.

And the cause of the excitement was quickly communicated.

"Ion's ship has been sighted!"

"The chorus is already assembling!

"All the Piræus — and half Athens are down on quais — already!"

The news had spread, indeed, and with the rapidity of contagion. The inner Agora was soon as deserted as though plague-stricken. The crowds thronging the colonnades had made a rush for the quais; and every inch of standing space on the docks and quais was soon packed with bare and with sandalled feet. All other business save that of helping to celebrate the home-coming of the now world-famous Olympian victor had been suspended.

Ion, standing on the deck of his trim ship, felt his very heart stand still.

How many months had passed since he had seen the violet home seas! Ah-h! there were the giant walls — goldentinted, yet showing their fortified strength! Here, skimming over the waters, were the purple and crimson sails! There were the huge gates and the uplifted towers, and, shining like a glorified city, far away, out of some fair dream, yonder, its tinted temples and marbles painted against the azure — was the home of Pallas Athena!

As Ion sailed into the inner harbour, his eyes, sharpened to see each and every detail, as never he had seen them before, saw another vision, shining from out the depths of the sea. Beneath the wine-tinted waters, the rounded

columns of the great docks, sunk below the sea-level, shone like those of a submerged city.

How clear was every line and curve of that temple of commerce whose base was the sea level and whose roof was the liquid sky!

"Oh! Athens! Athens! what or who can equal thee, in either beauty or trade?" burst from Ion, in uncontrollable delight.

Then, the next instant, he felt his very breath taken from him.

For now he saw, in his turn, that all the Piræus and half Athens had, indeed, assembled to greet him.

Thick as was the crowd, Ion soon caught the bloom of Glaucus' corn locks, shining beneath the golden shield of a high-placed Athena. For even along the quais and the outer colonnade, statues and living men were inextricably mixed. Timoleon he saw smiling his welcome from below his favourite Hermes. His father was stretching eager arms towards him close to one of Fortune's altars, and the dear goddess seemed to be tripping out to him, as though, also, to greet him, with her outstretched wings and her speeding feet.

Then, with a crash, there rang upon his ears the melodious outburst of cheering thousands. As the resonant Greek voices filled the clear air, Ion had need of all his self-control, for he seemed not standing but soaring, and out of the bright skies the twelve gods were surely shining down upon him.

As his father clasped him to his heart, ringing plaudits smote Ion's dazed ears. The commoner crowd gave way. The higher powers of the Port were eager to salute the victor. Ion was told he had conferred the greatest possible honour upon his birth-place; he had lifted the Piræus to an envied plane — this day would be remembered long after he was dead. To celebrate as glorious a victory, one the port must claim as its own, the whole town was given over to feasting. To prove this truth, thunderous cheers rent the air.

To the glad music of shouting voices Ion was led on as a conqueror, to a breach in the wall.

Through the mighty thickness Themistocles had built, an opening had been made. The Olympian victor must enter his birthplace, by a new and an unused door.

Scarcely had Ion passed through the breach, when melodious voices burst forth, in sonorous unison, to the accompaniment of many-tongued lyres. The costumed chorus of hired singers and dancers awaited the victor, to accompany him to his father's house. Even Ion's fiercest detracters must listen to the honied Pæon. His name was being chanted, in strophe and anti-strophe; he heard his feats of strength, the glories of his recent victory, the praises of his person and house compared to the most glorious achievements of old historic houses, of Homeric heroes. Once under the familiar house porch, his emotion found vent in sudden, passionate outburst.

Before the eyes of all, he swept his arms about his father. "Tell me, dear father, that you are satisfied. Then will this hour of glory be crowned indeed!"

Crates clasped Ion close. His breaking voice could scarce command itself. The real answer to his son's words, was his own beating heart, throbbing its gratified emotion against Ion's breast. The eyes of both were wet, as Crates half chanted, half sang—

"The life of the gods themselves, in Heaven, dearest Ion, is not as full of bliss as mine, through thee."

The chorus, circling before the door, burst then into

melodious finale. A fresh garland was flung toward Ion, and fell, where it was designed to fall, across his heaving breast. To mark the finish of this triumph as complete, three runners, from Athens, brought Ion the news of fresh honours. Place would be made for his votive statue, the one his father had ordered to commemorate his victory, close to the gardens of Aphrodite. In the Piræus, the city itself was to take charge of his portrait-statue, the archon announced, at the long and splendid banquet given by Crates, to the most illustrious guests.

In the days and weeks that followed, Ion experienced, in practical ways, the privileges Athens accorded to an Olympian victor. His appearance, at the Prytanieum, where, as Olympian victor, it was his privilege to eat at the City's expense, became the event of the day. He was made to rehearse his race, to the last detail. The cleverest, the most distinguished, listened to his recital with a kind of awe.

Political preferment had followed swift on social and civic honours. Ion's name was on men's lips, for election as a regimental commander, at the next meeting of the phyle.

Shortly after his election, Alcibiades, through Timoleon, made flattering propositions — would Ion undertake a secret mission to Delos? Some one, who could be trusted, must be sent to learn if the mighty priests of Apollo would be friendly, in their attitude, were the Sicilian war to come off.

This was a mission exactly suited to Ion's tastes. He went forth with spirit as light as though he were equipped with Mercury's wings.

It was during his absence, that the Fates began to twist the tangled threads that were to bind together the future destinies of several lives.

On one brilliant morning, in late Pyanepsion (October) a very distinguished Athenian, the famous art-critic, Critias

— giver of banquets, much addicted to a turning of couplets, in the style that was in vogue in Pericles' day — and equally given to lavish expenditure — a folly that made his dull verses and silly conundrums alone endurable — this elderly aristocrat went down to the Piræus on his usual errand — that of borrowing money.

Also as usual, Critias sought, among the bankers assembled in the inner Agora, for Crates' familiar figure. Crates, his clerks said, in reply to the Athenian's inquiries, was down at the docks. And down at the docks, striding the quais with agitated steps, Critias found his man. To his annoyance, however, Crates, for a banker with vast sums to loan, had a mind a hundred stadia away from business.

"Conceive of my disappointment O Critias! Ion, who was to have been here this very day — now cannot possibly set sail from Delos for another day or more — the winds have driven the sea to tremendous heights —"

Critias' somewhat fatigued features took on the polite mask of sympathy. Critias had not come down from Athens to discuss the state of Delian weather with a banker and shipping merchant. He had come to replenish a depleted purse.

Gradually, Crates was led on to business. Once the Athenian's errand was made known, and Crates, at the third turn of the quays, was once more banker and merchant. The strong eyes had narrowed. The glow had gone out of the face. Crates was, at last, wearing the mask of those part of whose vast business it is to lend, but to lend, at the highest possible interest.

Critias, as usual, was magnificently indifferent to the terms set. He belonged to the class of men who pocket borrowed money with an air of having come into an inheritance.

Self-centred, like all of his class, Critias, having secured

the loan at not too ruinous terms, was in haste to be off. His favourite roadster and his town-cart were awaiting him, at the outer gate of the inner Agora.

He was in the very act of turning, with hasty farewell, when he felt his arm gripped.

Crates' face, he saw, was aglow — the warm colour was dyeing cheeks and brow.

Crates stopped, turned a flushed face towards Critias, and seemed to be struggling with an attempt to frame words that were difficult to utter. Critias, whose eyes were sharpened, as are all art-critics, to detect the slightest changes in the human countenance, felt his curiosity suddenly on edge. What, in the name of the lesser gods—could the banker-merchant have to say to him—thus to dye his cheeks?

To Crates, the second most critical moment of his whole life seemed to be before him. Next to having seen Pollux clear the goal, the question that now trembled on his lips was to bring highest happiness or failure — failure too humiliating to face.

Why it should have been here, in this busy mart of men, with all the cries of the Port ringing in their ears,—why he should have been inspired to put the great test of his burning desire—the hope that had been nursed these months—here—Crates could never make clear, to his own mind, in later periods of reflection.

Yet, it was as if a god had spoken! He felt himself impelled to speak.

"Ah-h — my friend — a word before you go, if you please —"

"Twenty - if you wish -"

Encouraged by the Athenian's courtesy, Crates sucked in his breath.

"You have a daughter, I hear?" Crates presently said,

with an innocent, casual air. His wary, calculating eyes were aslant, and his lean fingers played calmly with his tablet, as he scanned Critias' aristocratic, sunken features.

"I have — but only one — the gods be thanked!" cried Critias, and he re-adjusted the folds of his mantle.

"And I have a son," Crates announced, laconically. He faced Critias' questioning eyes with a deep glance laden with meaning.

"You have — and one who is a credit to you, or to any Athenian father," Critias was in haste to cry out. The scent of possibilities was, indeed, now thick upon him.

"Well—and that is the sort of man he seems to me. All praise him, and with justice." Crates leaned back against a column. Still he was fixing Critias with his keen, clear eyes. He paused—to give a better emphasis to what was coming. "Why then, not marry him to your daughter?" he asked, suddenly, starting to an upright, as if the thought had been born of the moment.

Why not?" he continued, as though willing to debate the question, in an impersonal, passionless way, "he has honour and distinction. If, however, it be a question, also, of money—"

Critias here raised his arm. A slow, pompous gesture seemed to sweep away into the bright air so vulgar a suggestion. Critias' eyes however had brightened. A covetous glow suffused his features. "Come," he cried, softly, in the tones a man uses when caressing an agreeable project. "Come—dear friend—and let us walk up the colonnade—you can tell me more of what is in your mind."

What Critias found to be in Crates' mind enraptured him. Ion, as the son of this wealthy Piræan ship-merchant, so far from his father demanding a dowry, would himself bring a large fortune for the privilege of allying his son with as noble a maiden as Myrto. For Crates to aspire to such

connections was in itself proof of where his wealth and Ion's victory had placed him. Critias found, indeed, that Crates understood the laws of good society, almost as well as he had ship-building and commerce. He took the exactly right view of the part money should play in matrimonial bargains, to wit:—that he who had most to gain should pay, and pay high.

As for Ion himself, although like Myrto, he was only a necessary detail of the transaction, he was, fortunately, a son-in-law with whom even Critias could have something in common. He was handsome, extravagant, a lover of the chase and become famous. At several of the Symposia also, as Critias reflected with patronising condescension—he had heard him turn a couplet as neatly as he, Critias, could himself.

After a few moment's further talk, Critias considered the matter as good as settled. He thought it wise, indeed, to clinch the match by making the project known, and at once, to his wife Hermione.

Crates, on his part, had moved towards his waiting litter. His heart was surging with rapture. He noted little or nothing of the stir and bustle about him.

One picture, alone, was to rivet his gaze, as he gained a certain elevation.

Across the plain, upon the opposite hill-slope, a priestess came forth from the inner gloom of the temple of Aphrodite. Long after, Crates remembered that the priestess had worn a violet robe. The delicate draperies bloomed and fluttered, for a moment's space, against the harmonies of the polychrome structure.

Aphrodite's priestess was busy, apparently, with some temple treasure. A vase of some sort glittered and sparkled, as she stood rubbing the precious object. Had Aphrodite sent her messenger? Had the great goddess deigned to give celestial warning, in human shape, that in such transactions—when men bargained in human hearts—they should sometimes count with the sea-born, laughter-loving divinity?

Yet Love — except of the feeble matrimonial sort, had assuredly, no weight in Athenian marriage contracts. Even Crates, who might be termed a man of sentiment, looked with calm, unheeding eyes at Aphrodite's Temple. That in any way the divine goddess should feel her altars or her worship slighted, by uniting a man and a maiden who, as yet, knew nothing, except in a vague way, of each other's existence, demanded a stretch of the imagination as great as such a thought was in itself, surely, an act of impiety — to great Hestia — the goddess of marriage.

Crates forgot the familiar incident, only to remember it years later. Now his one thought was —

What news for Ion! Smiling Fortune had crowned, at last, Crates cried to his exultant senses, his most ambitious hopes. With such a marriage—and all that its great connections would bring—Ion surely might now aspire to all Athens had to give.

On Ion's return, however, Crates was to find that there were two ways of looking at a matrimonial project.

When Crates announced the great news, Ion turned upon his father as though the latter had struck him a blow.

"O father! father! — why could you not let well enough alone!" was Ion's bitter outburst.

Crates, in his turn, experienced the first shock of severe disappointment Ion had ever given him.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, angrily. "Have you some secret — something you wish to conceal?" And Ion met the flaming eyes that seemed to scorch him with the feeling of one who was seeing a new man in his own father.

In an instant Ion's anger died within him. For to see

his father thus wrought upon by passionate indignation, brought Ion to the melting point at once. After all, what valid excuse could he present? Why should he not seek to please his father? There was no tie in his love-life, sufficiently binding, to prevent his contracting marriage. That adorable Maia — the one woman he had ever seen, worthy of love — in spite of her letters, of her repeated assurances she would come — to join him, here in Athens — the possibility of her fulfilling her promises, was very unlikely. That old Nirias, who had married her, on his return from the Games, was very slow in dying.

Except for a young man's love of his liberty, and an instinctive horror of marriage, and all that such a tie must bring with it, Ion, whip his inventive genius as he might, could find no plausible plea for compelling his father to stop the hateful project.

Ion heaved a deep sigh. Then, straightening his firm frame, he accepted his doom. "Tell me this, dear father — how far has the matter gone?" he asked.

Crates lifted eyes that showed positive fear. "Surely you have no thought of entirely withdrawing?"

"No-o — Oh no!" cried Ion — with a drop in his voice
—"not if you wish it to go through. Only, you see — I
had counted on a few more years of freedom —"

"Early marriages are best," Crates said, with quick decision and immense relief. "I was married before I was five and twenty." Crates had still the true countryman's views of life.

"Oh — father — the world has moved on — since then. Men marry later and later — every year. Ah well," Ion added quickly, seeing his father's face darken again, "We'll wait till this war is over. You see — something may happen. I might be taken prisoner, or be killed outright —"

But Ion's gay laughter died upon his lip. The look of

anguish that convulsed his father's face moved him to place his arm about his parent's neck, and to lay his cheek close to the burning one beside it, as he said half soothingly, half in joke, "Well, since you have set your heart upon the match — I'll marry — to please you — only, give me a few more weeks — let the time be fixed for Gamelion."

Having gained his great point, Crates found concession easy.

First he kissed Ion and then he told him how this marriage had been his dearest heart's desire, and what a coping stone as brilliant an alliance would place upon Ion's own ambitions.

"I remember now"— Crates added, as though answering an inner doubt—" Critias spoke of Myrto's youth, as one objection her mother might possibly bring up. They may well be pleased to postpone the marriage—till the winter."

"Is the girl a beauty — do you know anything of her — father?" asked Ion, his tone not much more interested than had he been asking the character of a new slave.

It was Crates who showed warmth. He was quick with his answer. Myrto, he had learned, on excellent authority, was the living image of her mother — only, of course, as her mother was years ago, when Phidias had called her "the most beautiful woman in all Athens," and had promptly put her into marble. For, as all Athens knew, her features were those of the famous Juno.

"Humph! I had rather have a wife who resembled an Aphrodite—the Juno type is not, and never was, to my liking." Ion laughed lightly—but he also frowned. This being mated to a model of all the domestic virtues—No!—there was nothing attractive in such a prospect. The Furies take all this talk of marriage! However, if he could but manage to put it off, for a few months, he might be willing to entertain the project. If the child were really a beauty,

and not too much of the Juno-type, one might do worse things in life than to marry Critias' daughter.

Then, as the morning wore on, Ion felt the mounting of a certain dry humour. What a comical sight would be Timoleon's — would Glaucus' face present, when he should divulge the great news! Timoleon, for one, would assuredly not be pleased, for once he, Ion, married to the daughter of as celebrated a house as that of the Alcmæonidæ and Timoleon must sheath his sword of contempt. An Olympian victor and the member of as great a family, and there would be few in all Athens to be considered his, Ion's, superior.

Long before the mid-day meal had finished, Ion had begun to see in this proposed alliance several glorious possibilities.

## Chapter XVIII

#### AN ATHENIAN DAWN

On the site of that busy labyrinth of narrow streets where devout strangers and learned men are still searching for the sure signs that shall fix, beyond the questionings of doubt, the limits of Athens' ancient thoroughfares, other streets, far more crooked, converged upon the street of Hermes. Towards this winding dromos a tall, lithe shape was hurrying, in the greyish blue of dawn, in the year 415 before our Lord came. Dim as was the light, this early riser made his way, with effortless ease, from out the lower precinct of the Agora.

No one, indeed, knew better than Timoleon his crooked Athenian streets. None had a sweeter patience with the obstacles to quick progress Athenians on foot must expect in this crowded time, when every nook and secret hole in the famous city were as highly prized as a refuge, as though they were a palace.

As Timoleon neared his goal, sweeter, cleaner scents met the nostrils. Tiny garden enclosures sent forth the pungent scents of parsley, narcissi, and roses. Timoleon slipped his grace, with his mantle held tight, in between dairymen's carts redolent of cheeses and milk, fresh from the Attic plain. Tradesmen fumbling at the locks of their wooden shutters; butchers and fishmongers sleepily opening out their broad counters; and the flower-vendors, their baskets piled high, would glance at the hurrying figure, only to see it disappear around the next street corner. A lengthening row of low irregularly built houses — here and there a tall poplar or

the circle of a cypress rising above garden walls — black shapes against the violet dawn — the painted face of a Hecate, or a sculptured Apollo Aquieus built into the dead walls of the houses, together with the regimented Hermæ — the common gods of households — such dim outlines and shapes told Timoleon he had reached Athens' most fashionable street of residences — the Street of Hermes.

Past all such Timoleon slipped with noiseless ease. Closer still, about his chin, he drew his mantle. His longing was — to pass by unsaluted, should he meet a friend. Of all things — secrecy was essential. To carry the little adventure before him to a successful finish, he must be both unseen and his progress be unimpeded. The gods be praised — at least no banqueters were abroad in this all-too-fashionable thoroughfare!

At a certain turn in the street Timoleon started, stopped short as, in his turn, his oath broke from him. His prayer of praise had been premature. His impious outburst, however, helped him to think, and quickly.

With a swift turn of his hand, he swept his himation from its tight folds about his chin; he flung it in its usual formal sweep, beneath the right arm and over the left shoulder.

He straightened his head and walked forward.

A receding porch, and two or three narrow, upper windows told him the facade of a familiar house was before him. The torches, on house and porch, played their fitful light. Loosened chitons, mantles trailing in the dust—flushed faces and garlanded heads—these shapes trembled and swayed, danced or staggered, upon the yellow wall surfaces. With the subsidence of the torches, the picture was gone—lost in the violet blues of the dusk.

When next the torches flared, they showed contrasting shapes. The faces of the revellers were grey or empurpled, in the conflicting dawn and resin-tangled light. Pure-featured, calm-eyed, as gods should be, the guardian Hermæ stood straight and stiff in their midst, yet with benign aspect, as though to breathe a divine compassion upon human frailty.

Timoleon's set, fixed features, with the smile he had succeeded in summoning to his expressive lips, confessed the young man's annoyance only in its complete absence of merriment.

A merry shout greeted his appearance. The more youthful shapes swept towards him.

"Ah-h — and here's Timoleon! Well met! Come, lend us thy shoulder."

"No! -- come hither -- 'tis my legs that are weakest!"

" No -- mine -- mine!"

"And what of ours?—we who have been singing and playing all night are, surely, of all of you, in greatest need of firm support!" With the glee of children, two flutegirls made a sudden dash for Timoleon's composed figure. With frolicsome laughter they flung themselves upon him, flutes and lyres whirling in mid-air. They and their draperies were swept against the young man's dark-clad form.

The group of young men fell back. With a joyous shout, they watched the girls circling the young man's neck with their arms. Each was struggling for complete capture.

"That settles it — Timoleon — there's no fighting such weapons as those."

Timoleon, however, appeared to think otherwise. He smiled with sober gravity. He paid his salute to the fair girlish faces close to his own. Then, with quick and dexterous fingers, he loosened the clasp of the encircling arms.

To Erinna he gave Phocia's shoulder, as a supporting base for slackened muscles; Phocia, in lieu of Timoleon's unyielding form, found she must furnish, instead of seeking, support. The girls laughed and looked foolish; but they kept the pose Timoleon's deft hand had given to them.

"Manifestly, Timoleon, thou art not drunk," lisped a flat-nosed youth.

"Manifestly also, Critias' porter is either drunk or dead," cried Timoleon, now proceeding to smite the door, before which all were standing, with all his might. "Confound the creature! why can't he hear that which would wake the dead in the Ceramicus?"

Timoleon kept on pounding the door. His irritation at this unlucky encounter made vigorous action grateful. He could have cursed aloud in his anger.

"T—Tim—oleon" a voice cried, faint at first, but gathering a certain accent of pompous dignity as the speaker went on—"If—dear boy—you would but train your own slaves as you seek to govern those of others."

The torches showed an elderly shape, whose rich, embroidered mantle was close-drawn. The thick wreath of myrtle and hyacinths hanging awry about the brows was no beautifier of the sunken cheeks, the pendant lips, and the wine-drugged eyes. Yet a certain dignity of bearing proclaimed the aristocrat. Even after a long night of banqueting Critias could confront his own door with firm knees and a jest upon his lips.

A shout of delighted laughter greeted Critias' witticism. "Bravo! Critias — well put. Timoleon longs to govern us all. Why not rule your own kingdom? Surely Kronos —"

The door had now been opened. In the narrow gap stood a tall Nubian, whose rudely modelled brows were knit. He surveyed the group before him with a contemptuous expression.

"Well — and are you all here — at last?" he cried out, as he folded his long-sleeved arms. "Have none of you

been lost on the way? I seem to miss a philosopher or two!"

A joyous clapping of hands greeted this outburst. For this had the group waited. To hear what Critias' porter would have to say, after a night of feasting, was one among the very best ways of ending a festival. While all Athens talked of freedom, this Nubian alone had the courage to practice that which he did not happen to own.

The slave had moved forward, in this, his moment of success. His rude features softened, as he grasped his master's arm. He encircled his master's form with quick, experienced ease. As Critias leaned against the huge frame, he breathed a short sigh of relief; his slave's firm grasp he found almost as soothing as would be the couch yonder, in the quiet thalamos.

"Socius," he breathed, as he sank against the strong shoulder, "bear me within — I am very weary."

Socius smiled — with loving indulgence. He moved inwards, slowly, towards the narrow vestibule. "Ah-h, Master," he cried, loud enough for all to hear, "you are at your old tricks — I see — ever longing to give a good example to the young." Even as he walked he shot back a humourous glance at the group still gathered below the door steps.

The younger men clapped loudly, as though at a play. Their delighted laughter smote the air. A slave's tangled, hairy face shot through one of the upper windows, looked down upon the revellers with sleepy, wondering eyes; the horses stirred in their stalls—close to the vestibule door—pounded the concrete of their stable's pavement, snorting as though to greet the new day. They woke the dogs. With short, rapturous barks these latter now greeted the entering figures of their master, his house-guests, and Socius.

On the figure of the last house-guest, Socius quickly closed

the door. The inner bolt was shot firmly into its place. A dog barked harshly, protestingly, from within the house. One heard the agitated thumping of horses' hoofs in their stalls, the dogs' barking ceased, and all was still.

This moment of silence, apparently, was the one for which Timoleon had waited. With quick, decisive action, he proceeded to take command of the party.

Like babes staring at the sun, most of those left standing in the open street, were now blinking at the brightening gold of the new day in a helpless way. For the streets were full of light.

Timoleon's brisk, authoritatives tones sounded like a trumpet call.

"Ariston - my lad - straighten thy mantle," he cried, in his clear, bright voice; "dost want all Athens to know you drank your wine neat? There, that is better - now march — the sooner you get your bath, the sounder you'll sleep. Yes - at the Stoa - this afternoon, at the usual hour - and - you two," and Timoleon turned to the two flute-girls who, suddenly roused by the surprise of daylight had instinctively, after the fashion of women, begun to rearrange their crumpled draperies, "now off with you. There Phocia — there's your flute — hold it tight. Ah — the lyre -yes, Erinna - grasp it thus - 'twill be safest beneath vour arm. So - now - farewell - and walk your straightest. As I said," Timoleon cried after the two. now slowly moving onward. "one wants no scandal in the street of Hermes. Agesilaus and Ariston, wait - pray. I'll give you each a shoulder — I go your way — or part of it."

The magic of a man with a will or a purpose worked its common miracle. One by one the revellers melted away. Wisps of crocus-coloured draperies floated in the faint dawnbreeze, in mazy swirl about sandalled feet. The yellow streaks of light now tinting the house-fronts beat out glints

## 214 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

of silver in Phocia's bee-embroidered chiton. The two girls' fair skins, their trailing locks, rose garlanded, the outlines of their perfect shapes moving within the delicate transparencies, grew fainter and fainter. The street was soon emptied of all save the growing glory of the Athenian day.

## Chapter XIX

#### OVER A GARDEN WALL

At the turn of the next street, Timoleon found himself alone. The slaves had taken their respective masters in charge.

Once more Timoleon lifted his eyes to trace the dawn's progress. The clear, bright skies showed a pink, flushed surface. Lycabettus' crown had caught the first blaze. Its tall, cragged peak glowed like a star dropped from the night's blue. Beyond, the hills bloomed, rosy, mist-enwrapped. The streets were now white with light. The features of the carved faces on walls and pedestals shone out, those freshly carved clear and strong; those of an ancient date, stained and weather-worn.

Timoleon's decision wavered perceptibly, as he noticed these signs of the breaking day. With characteristic daring, however, he determined to proceed. After all, a little earlier, or a little later, what did it matter? Had he not tried every sort of light? He made a quick, sudden plunge into a side alley.

This narrower street seemed almost deserted. Here high garden walls were intersected by house-fronts of a mean appearance.

Timoleon glanced anxiously upwards. Not a slit of an upper window but was covered by his quick eye. Neither slave's or woman's face was to be seen.

. A garden wall now rose high before him. The spirals of tapering trees and groups of tall shrubs proved the garden, for Athens, a fairly spacious one. Over the top wall fell a mass of vines, whose green growth framed a door.

### 216 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

Timoleon placed his foot on the lower step of the green door. He let his mantle trail. He stood — rigid as a dog with its bird in sight. Certain sounds coming from within the walled garden — sounds he had been waiting long weeks to hear — reached his ear. He could scarcely breathe for joy.

First came a dog's sharp, rapture-laden bark. Then a girl's voice — soft and low. Then a long silence.

Once more Timoleon's breath came quickly, with gratified content. The third voice—the one he had dreaded might again spoil his sport—was unheard. Could it be possible the girl within the garden was really alone? If so Hermes, his sometimes kind god would, indeed, have rich reward.

Even as his vow escaped him, as though to earn the promised tribute, the god of luck sent the steps within, nearer and ever nearer.

Timoleon felt his moment had come.

Suddenly opening his tunic, Timoleon tore from its hiding place a withered garland. With a skilful toss, the chaplet was flung across the garden wall.

A soft cry came from within. The flurried rustling of a woman's garments, in among the shrubbery, caught Timoleon's ear. So still was the morning, the now swift, hard breathing of one startled, almost panting—this blessed human sound came over the garden wall. Once again, before he spoke, Timoleon cautiously listened. Save that quick breathing, all was still.

"Myrto - is it indeed thou?"

Timoleon's voice was excellently tuned to the music of his speech. It was low and tremulous. His eyes had deepened in colour — for in this stake for which he was playing, there was danger. When facing danger, the bronze of Timoleon's eyes turned to blackened marble.

The stillness assured Timoleon the words had been heard.

There came a low, smothered gasp, as of wonder mixed with joy. A long moment passed. Then a soft voice called out, in affrighted tones:

"Timoleon - is it indeed Timoleon?"

"Ah-h — dearest Myrto — with all my heart I salute thee!"

Timoleon was listening to the tones of his voice — as an actor might when practising a lover's part. Being a excellent critic, he judged the note sufficiently tender.

Once more there was a perfect stillness. The reedy branches, growing below the garden wall did, indeed, creak softly. Myrto, presumably, had stirred within her hiding place. A long moment passed before her answer came.

"I shall wear your chaplet - always."

The voice was faint — was it from weakening courage, or from a reticent desire to veil a shyness of feeling? Timoleon felt he must fan the flickering flame — and with all his might.

"And I — what have I? I must go into strange, faraway countries, with no warmer assurance than that? Ah — sweet Myrto — look into thy heart, and see if there be no message — there — for him who longs to press that dear heart — for evermore — to his!"

As he was delivered of his impassioned outcry, Timoleon felt—at last, and to the full—the excitement of the situation. Caught—red-handed—at this low trick of wooing Critias' daughter, in this back-handed way—and all his chances of success were gone. Undiscovered, and with Myrto's love avowed—and his whole life might possibly be changed—his fortunes crowned with success.

He had to wait for his answer. When it came, the childish tones were laden with feeling.

"Is it indeed true, Timoleon — this I hear — that you are intending to leave us?" Along with the cry, there came

the sound of a nervous crumbling of leaves. In her agitation the girl was doubtless punishing the nearer shrubs about her.

Timoleon smiled his cynical smile. How quickly news travelled in Athens! He had taken care to talk, casually, in the Market Place, of a possible journey to Sparta.

"Alas!" the smooth, sad tones came pearling over the wall; "I fear I must. But though I may go — mighty love goes with me. I shall pray the gods, daily, to bring me back."

"Oh—and I"—the young voice answered, its tones were now thrilled and strong with feeling—"I shall pray—I shall do naught but pray."

"May I then hope to carry your love with me — as my safeguard, sweet one?"

He had put into his tones all the simulated passion he could summon. True gambler that he was, he would risk all his fortunes on this last throw.

Timoleon's luck was proverbially poor. Hermes appeared to have suddenly abandoned his cause. Myrto's fresh, pure voice had begun to chant, melodiously, tremulously—its first love yow—

"If Hera hear my prayer — may I ne'er wed —" when steps were heard, and deep tones cried out, as from a distance:

"And what — in Heaven's name, child, does this hiding mean? How came you here — in the garden — and alone?"

At the sound of the rich Nubian voice, Timoleon felt a murderous instinct. Hateful, fateful voice! A second more, and he would have had that foolish child's promise with all that a pious maiden's vow might bring to pass.

He could have cried aloud in his anger. Instead, he must stand as rigid as a statue. He must stay his very breath. That Asia's, Myrto's nurse, that her slave's ears were as long as her knowledge of life was complete, all Athens knew. No need of a Molossian hound in Critias' house-hold.\*

Timoleon caught Myrto's broken, embarrassed laugh. The crackle of the branches told him that she had sprung, almost at a bound, into the open pathway. Obviously also, the girl had either released, or she had trickily pinched, her dog, for he was barking furiously. Under cover of this diversion, Myrto's tone had grown more and more reassured. She had regained, apparently, sufficiently self-possession to cry out:

"Nonsense Asia! It is you, surely, who must have a lover — yourself. Ah — ha! — you are always so mightily suspicious of others. Where is mother? Let us seek her."

Asia's reply was lost. She and her charge must be now entering the house. In the garden, as in the street, all was still.

As Timoleon sauntered down the now almost blindingly lighted street, he cursed his luck anew. This then — was the end of all his long patience — of his persistent spying! How many weeks it had taken to effect this longed-for meeting! To find out the time and the moment when this child Myrto might be counted upon to come into the garden — had he not been there at the same early hour — morning after morning — hoping against hope for the lucky chance when the hateful Asia might be absent — and Myrto within the walls — alone?

The great chance had come — at last; and his usual luck had pursued him — the meeting had all but come to naught.

\*Such hounds were sometimes kept by jealous husbands as guardians of the women's quarters, in the master's absence.

### ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

220

It was nothing to Timoleon's hard heart that he had heard the delicate flutterings of that girl-love. At the present pass to which his life and fortunes had come, love of the poorer, purer sort was the last gift he asked of the gods—unless—of course—as in Myrto's case, he saw a way to work the feeling to his own advantage. The pretty ways of maiden-love—shyness, timidity and freshness—all this was lost on Timoleon, as was the glory of this brilliant morning.

In a city like Athens, where noble women and maidens were virtual prisoners in the gyneconitis, for Timoleon to have seen, even once, and face-to-face, as carefully guarded a maiden as Myrto, was nothing short of the work of the gods.

On another dawn, some weeks before, Timoleon had been preceding the corpse of a cousin to its long rest in the outer Ceramicus. Near the Dipylon gate, both the funeral and a covered carriage had been stopped. A long train of mules, heavily laden, had blocked the way.

Critias and his family were entering the city. The annual drive, from their Eubæan estates to the town house, was nearly ended.

The wail and chant of the mourners—even the funeral dirge—fell almost gratefully on the wearied senses. The familiar strains told the elders they were nearing home, after the long night's rough drive.

Myrto alone had leaned forth to look her fill of the show. The train of relations, the hired mourners, the musicians heading the procession had delighted the child's love of pomp. There was ever a festive air about an Athenian funeral that seemed to make burial pleasant.

Myrto suddenly encountered a full, strong gaze. Two

beautiful brown-gold eyes were fixed full upon her. By the luckiest of winds that ever blew, the light dawn breeze had lifted her own veil. In re-adjusting its folds Myrto took occasion to give the stranger a swift return glance. In her delight at the young man's beauty, and in the excitement of experiencing a new thrill—one that ran through her young veins like warm sunlight—Myrto had remained transfixed. She was experiencing a wholly new—a divine sensation—one that seemed to change her whole being.

Before her, as in a mirror, there was the quickening fire of two brown-gold eyes, that looked wise and masterful for loving. A music deeper and more searching than that breathed through festival pipes, was making every pulse beat in tune with a rapture that could only be love's own.

As if she had lost all power to summon her maiden's modesty, Myrto had found herself smiling back. For that one entrancing instant, looking and smiling thus into the other's eyes, to Myrto, at least, it was as if everything that youth could say to youth had been felt, and spoken, and answered.

Then Myrto's lashes, in meek obedience to their training, had swept the burn of her cheek. She had hurriedly bent her head, as she folded her veil about her. The flute notes had freshened upon the morning air. The wail and chant of the mourners once more rose and fell, in rhythmic iteration, as Critias's coach had dashed city-wards.

It had taken the patience of weeks for Timoleon to accomplish this second meeting.

Hermione and her daughter Myrto had gone to none of the autumn festivals. Critias had had a fit of economy. Such righteous impulses were usually left for his womenkind to work out. Timoleon, therefore, had had no chance of even exchanging a glance with Myrto.

Now — at last — his patience had been rewarded. The

mornings he had haunted that tiresome, dull garden wall had not been lost. Even though Myrto's silly love-vow had been cut in two, if the interchange of a smile, and a single admiring stare could work the miracle of love in a child's heart, what might not impassioned utterance accomplish? Timoleon felt he could safely leave the love-filter of his daring avowal to work its results.

The shadow of a better fortune, as he walked towards the western end of the Agora, seemed to flit beside him. It was destined he should have one more adventure before he gained his home door. As he came upon the long row of gods and goddesses, close to the western end of the Agora, he heard a well-known voice.

"Ah-h, Timoleon — out — and so early? 'Tis hours before your usual time."

Glaucus looked as fresh as a girl. His blond curls were crisp and shining; they fell over his brow in a perfect circle. The pink skin, the shapely nose—flattened to make a straight line with the smooth brow, the full lips and beautifully rounded cheeks, were in striking contrast to Timoleon's dark, thought-worked face.

Timoleon noticed his friend wore a hat, and that he carried a goad in lieu of his usual long cane.

In answer to Timoleon's quick survey, Glaucus cried out:
"Well met! I was looking for some one to join me—"

"And where now — gay Glaucus?" smiled Timoleon, scenting an agreeable invitation.

"Out through the Dipylon gate, into the country and back. Will you come? I long to try those new coach-horses."

Timoleon considered. His next engagement must be met in an hour or less. Presently he nodded assent. It would soothe him to take the air. The two passed quickly out of the market shade, to wend their way to the stables. Once seated in the high coach, and the horses put to their speed, after a few commonplaces, Timoleon felt a return of his depression. The thought would come — why, of all the men he knew, had he alone been singled out for wretchedness? Why should it not have been Glaucus who was turned poor and he, Timoleon, who had continued his old, pleasant life, with horses, and country houses, and a generous giving of banquets?

"The wine too strong — after all, last night — Timoleon? Yet no one carried his cups as well as you," lisped Glaucus, a touch of sympathy in his voice. Glaucus was not noted for quick insight.

"Oh — Bacchus never scourges me," almost bitterly replied Timoleon, noticing how near they were to the very garden where Hermes had played him false.

"It is Hermes — always, who has me under his displeasure. Can you imagine anything more tormenting," he added, with a sudden, rare impulse of frankness, "than to have a beautiful young girl about to avow her love to you — in broad daylight, and for her slave to make a point of coming, hours before her time, from market as though solely to keep the vow from being uttered?"

Glaucus compassionately agreed few situations in life were more tantalizing. Then, as he touched his steeds with his goad, he wondered who, in the name of all the gods, Timoleon could have found to listen to his love-vows—in Athens, of all places, where every one knew his history. Some men were unaccountably successful in love! Timoleon, for example, was always having adventures—or, at least, was always recounting them. What could women see in him?

As if to inspect his friend anew—as though he had never properly seen him before—Glaucus turned. He gave all the seconds he could safely steal from his horses, to

looking over Timoleon's physical equipment. Well — yes — one must acknowledge the features were well-cut — the nose a little too thin perhaps at the base, and the lips needed more colour and fulness. Any one could see, Timoleon was of noble blood, and a gentleman. He was careful to keep up his training, as a gentleman should — and poor as he was — and sponge as every one knew him to be, there was a certain pride and cleverness about him that made his company desirable. As a result of this summing-up, Glaucus saw fit to change his mind on an important decision.

"By the way, Timoleon — I give a banquet to Ion — in a night or two — will you come?"

Timoleon forced a smile.

"Gladly — I hear he returns to-morrow — his mission was successful — I hear."

"Yes — Now everything Ion does, the gods crown — as Olympia crowned him. Once a man has luck —"

"And money," quickly interrupted Timoleon, the jarring note of bitterness cutting the clear air — "Where would Ion be now, were it not for his father's trading ships?"

All the hate of the penniless aristocat was in the bitter tone.

Glaucus laughed good humouredly. "Well — dear man, Plutos is a good friend — but Ion is also a charming man — and our gods love beauty and a sweet nature — and men are only mortals — For my part, I always loved Ion."

Timoleon was about to make a crushing retort, if only to remind Glaucus of a time when he would scarce be seen with the Piræan in the Poikilé, but the off leader just then stood upright, frightened at a drove of sheep a shepherd was driving across the road, and Glaucus had need of all his mind and skill to avert disaster. When the animal was quieted to the point of walking on four legs, Glaucus asked

Timoleon the last war news. In talking war Timoleon forgot Ion. Syracuse and her enemies were of larger promise for one with empty pockets, than sowing seeds of dissension between two rich men.

# Chapter XX

### MYRTO'S AWAKENING

Two days later, in the gynæconitis of Critias' house, Myrto, as she stood in the open court, heard the voices of her dull life calling to her. The whir of the loom in the spinning-room called loudest. Whatever happened, to attempt to spin on this morning of mornings she felt she could not. To sit at the loom, or to weigh out the wools or flax for the slaves would be, she felt, intolerable. At least she might wait until her mother appeared.

Myrto slipped between the pillars of the sun-flooded court. Below the square opening, the very dogs were asleep. Under the shade of the columns they lay, curled and coiled, as if anxious to kill a day that offered nothing better than a great deal of sun and a warmth in the air that made sleep better than keeping awake, since there was no outlet for the dance in the pulse—save a slow wagging of the tail—until Serapion, their true boy comrade should appear.

Myrto's own pulses were throbbing too noisily for quick, clear thought. The terrifying knowledge locked within her childish soul seemed a burden greater than she could carry.

She was still dazed — wrapt — out of her little world. Timoleon's withered love-token — the bit of garland she wore in her bosom — was surely as binding as a betrothal! She pressed the leaves the closer, as she smiled. She felt their prick with secret rapture — her blushes, she knew, were dyeing her cheeks. The instant after, her heart-beats all but died within her shaking frame. Were her mother — above all, were her father, to learn of that morning's adventure,

the punishment and disgrace that would befall her were beyond imagining.

The spectre of fear vanished before the divine sensations that next swept her young soul.

She was loved! She was loved! And by one of the handsomest, cleverest, and most brilliant of Athenian nobles. The very knowledge of such a wondrous fact made Myrto's young soul thrill with rapture.

Then, as the thought rose up, dark-visaged, sinister as one of the faces of the Fates — of the inexorable laws governing her life, Myrto's young soul was rocked with her first sense of real anguish. Unless the gods themselves should interfere — how would her father ever consent to accept Timoleon as her suitor? His father was in exile — the estates were confiscated — Timoleon himself was living on next to nothing! — child as she was, Myrto knew such a man, thus circumstanced, had no more chance of being an acceptable suitor than if he had been a pig-like Arcadian. Yet Hermione — yet possibly her dear mother might be won over. She, surely, had been unhappy enough in her own marriage! Who knew — if praying hard to Hestia might not lead to a softening of that dear, fond mother's heart?

Rocked thus by the alterations of hope, sorrow, rapture, and despair, Myrto sat in the sun, at the base of a column. Idly, as from sheer habit, she went on stroking the silken coat of her pet Maltese—as her thoughts ran the wild gamut of this new love-rhapsody.

Presently Myrto's fingers stiffened. Her breath seemed to harden on her lips. Her heart's beating came to a full stop.

She had heard her own name spoken — by her father, and not once, but twice!

The door of the thalamos was ajar. Through it and the

thick curtain, hanging before the door, came the sound of her parents' voices. They were disputing. There was nothing unusual in the latter fact; they rarely, indeed, agreed about anything — although Hermione, being a great lady, and a model of behaviour, never openly opposed her husband, except when they were alone, behind their chamber curtain. There was, therefore, nothing unusual in the sound of her parents' voices, raised in the heat of their mutual anger, to make her heart stop beating.

"Have you told Myrto?" That was the question that had transfixed the girl into the immobility of a breathless statute.

For her father to mention her at all was sufficiently terrifying. Being a girl, he, of course, always either pointedly ignored her existence, or failed to remember, as a rule, her presence.

Her mother's answer Myrto could not hear. The tapestry was so aggravatingly thick!

Myrto now glanced hurriedly, excitedly about. No slave shape was to be seen. Thereupon, deliberately, Myrto planted her ear beside the curtain, as close as she dared. She had caught Asia's, her slave's, trick.

"Have you told Myrto?" she now heard her father plainly ask.

"No — not yet," her mother's voice sounded less clear; it seemed fainter because of a certain sadness with which it was laden.

"Do so then to-day — he will be here shortly. I intend to give him a banquet."

Standing now between the tapestry and the door — Myrto could catch the sound, but not the words, of her mother's long sentences. Presently, however, some words rang out clear and strong.

"I have long since known you have lost all pride. If

you can but pass all your days abroad — at the Assembly, or the Gymnasia, or with Alcibiades or Polytion, and your nights at the Symposia — if you can but have at your own banquets the wine to run like rivers — and you can tell your guests the singing-girls are all from Corinth — you care not how quickly my dower goes — or whether your sons marry maidens like Nausicaä — or whom Myrto is to marry."

"By the great gods! Madam," here angrily interrupted Critias — Myrto could hear her father springing upright — for the bed-cords creaked beneath him — "Am I alive and capable of walking about — that I hear such language — and from a woman? How often am I to be reminded that it is your dowry, your money, your property that is keeping the household going? Zeus! he who marries an heiress is indeed under the curse of the gods! Is there no teaching you your place?" To the storm of that outburst, there succeeded a silence. Myrto knew her mother was struggling to contain herself. Her voice rose up sweet once more. Its ring of habitual submission sounded clear and distinct.

"I have long known I am naught — We Athenian women now have fallen thus — to be as little regarded as slaves sometimes as easily put away —"

"Come — come — none of that. I was angered — no man will stand a woman ruling the house — even if she have the money. I assure you I have no desire to persist in carrying out this plan, against your wish. I desire it — it will be an excellent match — as you will see. When I saw him the other day, I was struck with his beauty."

"Is he then so fair?" her mother asked, in a mollified voice. Hermione's anger melted out of her whenever her husband assumed a courteous tone. Myrto felt her own breath hardening on her lips — for if her mother yielded,

whatever was to come to her was certain to be a doom as fixed as fate.

"Yes—his form is perfect. I was delighted. He is as strong as he is fair. And since his Olympian victory, every door is open to him. Hem!—tell the child to-day—and that I shall be pleased. Hem!—the small farm in Elis shall be hers." There was a slight pause. "By the way, I must go to the slave-market. Nirias says the mines will yield largely this year. He needs some strong young slaves."

Her mother said nothing. Yet Hermione commonly flew into a passion at the mere mention of the purchase of more slaves.

The talk came to an end after that. Myrto could hear her mother walking about. She had opened the great chest—she was taking out the plate for the day's use. Her father had turned to finish his sleep. The bed-girths groaned anew beneath him, as he changed his posture. Myrto dropped the curtain.

For a long time she had strength only to lean against the wall. She steadied herself with her outstretched palms, as she flattened them against the cold stucco. She was too shaken by the tremor of her mingled fear, curiosity, and amazement to care now whether she was caught or not.

What could it all mean? That she was to be married? Could that be the great, the real solution to this stupendous riddle of conversation? If it all meant marriage — then, to whom? Whom could her father possibly have in mind?

As in a dream, every man she had ever heard mentioned, by either her parents or her relations, in connection with her marriage, was passed in view. It could not be Cepis—he was far too old, nearly fifty. Yet he was rich; and her father, as she knew, would never be "pleased" with any son-in-law who was not wealthy. Then there was

Cephalus, the richest of all — the friend of Nirias, he who had three houses: had he had an Olympian victory?

Could it — Ah! rapturous thought! — could it be Timoleon? Had Hera so quickly granted her prayer? Had Timoleon's father been miraculously pardoned, out of exile — and above all — had he come into his estates once more? Was it because of this Timoleon was going away? Alas! hope had fled. Never had a single slave brought news from the Agora of Timoleon's winning anything.

Myrto stumbled, she scarce knew how, to the door of her room. For once its dulled light was welcome. She even drew the hanging before the door as close as possible. Her heated temples must be cooled. Her eyes were smarting with pain.

As she groped about in search of a ewer, the hanging was swept aside. Asia's large outlines filled the narrow space.

"Come — come — up with you, honey!— we are all of us late this morning." Her voice, soft as it was, was like a whip; it stung Myrto's quivering soul into freshened sense of its pain.

With a cry, Myrto ran forward to clasp her young arms about her slave's neck. Brazier and ewer came to a quick rest, on the plastered floor; for lighted coals and water were not safe things to handle when Mryto was in one of her impassioned fits for caressing.

"Tell me, Asia — has mother told you?" Myrto whispered, as she clung to her slave's neck. "Do you know what is to happen to me? Is it Timoleon — dear Asia — is it?"

Asia laid Myrto's beautiful young head on her broad bosom. She patted the trembling shoulders with her strong hands. As she soothed and petted the child, her own rich voice was not free from a quiver of feeling. Whatever she knew or did not know was not written upon her firmly-

moulded, Nubian features. She had not carried the secret counsels of one of Athens' most distinguished families for near upon half a century to let a child read her mind. "There! There! honey — don't shake so, child. There's no evil stroke of fate coming to you — darling." And she began, with her usual order, to lay out the garments of the day — one by one.

"Ah — but — if I am made to marry any one but Timoleon — the worst of evils will befall," cried Myrto, giving a despairing twitch to her golden locks, now freed for Asia's skilled combing.

Asia shot a quick, investigating glance at the face between its long falls of gold. What ailed the child? Could anything have happened, in the garden—while she was unwatched? As Asia plied her comb, she thought it well to sound the waters. Myrto's thoughts were no deeper than a brook. Any one could fish therein.

"Tush — tush — child — you are always babbling of Timoleon. He is no match for you — as I've often told you. Poor — a spy — as every one says — "

"Every one lies, then! He is truth — and honour — and all that is noble — I tell you!" Myrto's passionate denial made Asia's dark brows lift.

"Ah-h — and how came you to know so well a gentleman's character? What can you know of men — my honey? Those who know, tell strange tales of your Timoleon."

"Those who hate him do," hotly answered Myrto, pushing Asia from her.

"I bear him no hate — but I know him — and well." Asia's face darkened as she thought of all the rumours about, in the city, concerning Timoleon's latest love intrigue. A sudden, passionate heat half blinded the woman at the thought of such a man owning her beloved Myrto. In the violence of her indignation she actually shook the

child. "What, pray, do you know of men — you — buried here in your prison, with your amulets and your dolls, your dogs and your child's games — and with your precious brother? Do such things teach you to know the base from the noble, the mean man from him who is wise and generous? It is in the market place one learns to know men, I tell you."

"Let me go"— Myrto half shrieked, wrenching herself free. In her turn her anger stifled her. "You are ridiculous! You know well I have ceased — and for years — to play with dolls — and it is you who have covered yourself all over with amulets, and — as for a prison — one can learn a good deal — even here —"

Asia's face brightened. "Hoity-Toity! We're in a bad temper this morning. Some one has been hearing that which they should not. Let me see—I'll take a look at the thalamos door"—Asia pushed her head beyond the chamber doorway. When she turned and stood upright, her lips were indulgently curved. She proceeded, with her usual calm, to give her skilful touch to the draperies of Myrto's chiton, as though the disgrace of listening at a parent's door was a most forgiveable offence. Her sweet Nubian laughter filled the dark room. "Well—well—listeners never hear any good of themselves. And if Master has been talking, you need consoling, honey, and no roughing of the tongue from me."

"Dear Asia — tell me — and do they mean, really, to marry me?" Myrto's soft, pleading eyes, and the persuasion of her clinging arms about Asia's neck would have moved a less seasoned tongue to indiscretion.

"There! Don't shake so, honey. There's no evil stroke of fate coming to you — that much I can say. He's rich and beautiful — this other — and famous — the gods have been good — but what silly words am I babbling? By the

way, I was to tell you my lady says that you need not be at the loom this morning. You can play till noon. She will see you in the pastas. How shall I ever get you dressed, if you tremble so?"

That was all Myrto could wrench from the lips of the best and most loving friend, except her mother, she had in the world. During the long dressing hour, while she was being bathed and perfumed, her hair dressed, the richer chiton for the day shaken out and draped, Myrto pled, she cajoled, she lavished tears and kisses on her dear slave's cheeks and neck, but Asia would tell her nothing.

Then Myrto had a change of mood. Her naturally gay, still childish nature took a swift, upward flight. After all, whatever this great change was, it would be at least a change, she said to herself. The same dull, dreary waste of days, for a time, would be diversified by scenes and emotions that would surely be soul-stirring. The child in her could dance, thus, through the arcades of fancy.

Before she was fully dressed, she had already seen distinctly before her one perfect—one delicious moment. What a triumph to drag Serapion behind a column, before the noon meal, and there, in the court's full sunlight, to watch his face, when she told him she was going to be married! By that time, she would surely know to whom.

# Chapter XXI

#### HERMIONE AND MYRTO

THE last loop in the long garlands had been taken. The banqueting hall was now ready for the evening's feast. Breaking though she felt her heart to be, Hermione had not slighted her task.

The grinning masks that served to support the garlands leered, at correct intervals, through a thick frame of clustering roses, tulips, and hyacinths. Hermione's trained eyes swept the floral frieze; a sculptor might have taken the rope of flowers and their grotesque supports as a model for the capital of a column.

"Tighten that last loop — give it a firmer twist — that will suffice. And now you may go to your quarters."

With what patience she could summon, Hermione watched the last long-sleeved figure and bared heel pass beyond the doors opening. Then, with a sudden passionate movement, she swept her hands to her face. The long held-in sobs shook her frame.

This instant of solitude in this busy, feast-giving, Andron—this one still moment brought a soothing, physical relief to Hermione's tortured heart. She let the sobs shake her frame. Neither fear of her husband, nor fear of the slaves' eyes, nor of Myrto's distressed wonder were to be dreaded. She could weep, and weeping, feel somewhat eased of her anguish.

On the figure of the weeping mistress the masques looked—and looking, grinned on. This silent, decked chamber, with its perfumed garlands and its rose-hued walls, that

seemed waiting for the entrance of crowned happiness, of a laughing train of garlanded youths and gay nymphs was filled instead with a bowed figure and with the sounds of stifled sobbing.

Hermione quickly mastered her emotion. Myrto, she reminded herself, with a sudden start, must already be awaiting her — in the pastas.

She passed quickly from the banqueting-room into the peristyle.

The whole court was flooded with sunlight. Its airy coolness, its beauty, and its orderliness were a delight to the senses. The third most beautiful peristyle, in a private house, in all Athens, the houses of the wealthy Polytion and of Alcibiades alone surpassed this andron. Had there been more money in the Eubœan farm, and more slaves to pay the artists' bill, Critias would assuredly have striven to have surpassed his rivals.

Hermione, at first, had been angered at this loss of slaves that had gone for a tinting of walls and of Doric columns. In time she came, however, to rejoice in the beauty of the court. Her "Athenian prison," as she called the town house, was made, by its beauty, a little more endurable. When Critias was abroad, she, at least, could revel in its coolness and beauty.

The prick of the air now touched Hermione's open throat and bared neck and arms. Her whole frame was stung into freshened activity. Though the tears were still in her eyes, she smiled involuntarily, as the winds swirled downwards through the open square, and her draperies wound about her limbs, tightening like a coil. The thin house-chiton revealed the true Juno model — lines full and chaste, yet delicately voluptuous.

With a sudden, passionate movement, Hermione raised

her arms. The true, preferred god of her ancestral house—her beloved Apollo—stood before her.

She lifted her soul in prayer. She besought the god to give her wisdom, to counsel her in this dark hour. She omitted none of his attributes, ending with the usual formula: "Whoever thou art or mayst be"—that she might win his special regard. He might show her the way out of her trouble — might whisper to her how to delay Myrto's marriage — how to keep the child near her — for a few months longer, at the very least.

The light from his jewelled eyes surely sparkled with living flame!

Hermione, tall as she was, could not quite reach her adored deity's neck. In a rapture of pious ecstacy she flung her arms about the amber-hued pedestal. All her trouble then seemed taken from her. She felt certain a miracle would come to pass.

Hermione's pious mood quickly changed — for she had opened the court door into the gynæconitis.

As never before, it struck her how small and mean was this tiny women's court! How stunted the columns of the rude peristyle! The very bases of the columns were stained, defaced.

From the open kitchen came the smell of cooking. The noise of loud, coarse talk, and rude laughter rose above the clashing of dishes and the rattle of the looms, now in full activity in the spinning-rooms. Smells, clattering tongues, and the slaves' laughter, rolled out like a nauseous, deafening flood.

Hermione, in her quick anger and passionate hate of it all forgot her prayer for wisdom. She remembered, through the mists of her wrath, that, small and mean as was this court, she was at least mistress within its narrow confines. Hermione once more lifted her hands. This time it was to clap them — and loud. A dozen slaves' heads filled the door openings. The famous cook — hired for the day to prepare the evening's banquet — stood, ladle in hand, gaping-mouthed.

Hermione, in the middle of her mean court, looked as imperious as Athena herself, and as threatening as any one of the Dark Sisters. Her words cut like a sword-thrust.

"Cook — the court has the smell of a charnel-house. Cooks who come with a reputation ahead of them should work to improve them, or they may find themselves without the article."

The cook gave Hermione a dazed glare, all but dropped his ladle, recovered it, slunk behind the faded rag that did duty for a hanging, drew it, and closed the creaking door. Behind the door, the cook's helpers were then given a lesson in profanity, and an arraignment of the sex to whom he owed his existence, that proved Euripides might have taken his famous invectives against women hot from the lips of a cook in a rage. Hermione's voice was heard still lifted high in command.

"Megara — all of you, out there, in the spinning-room — follow cook's example — shut both mouth and doors. Cease trying to rival the noise of a copper-smith's shop."

A frightened group of slaves' faces, clustering about the spinning-room, suddenly disappeared. More creaking announced that another reluctant door had been closed. The court was suddenly still, save for the ring of childish laughter.

As the gay babble swept Hermione's ears, the beautiful face softened. Every feature was harmonized. The Junolike mingled dignity and loveliness that once Phidias had caught, with his quick eyes of discerning genius, and, years ago, had transfixed into marble, this sudden glow of wom-

anly emotion made Hermione as glorious as was now her living portrait, the famous masterpiece.

The mounting throb of tenderness reminded Hermione her eyes and cheeks must be wearing the tell-tale signs of her late emotion. She passed unnnoticed into her chamber. Hermione looked quickly about her dark room. By instinct rather than sight, she grasped her brushes. Her mirror was held with a firm hand, and the pigments plied with skill.

The pastas — the family sitting-room — was almost as bright as was the small court. The noon shadows on the rude columns without were blue. This inner, enclosed room, with its bright hangings, its graceful chairs, its inlaid klinai, with its mound of embroidered pillows, its altar to Hestia, and its tall reed-like candelabræ, was at its very best and cosiest moment. The noon radiance swept through columns the bright Athenian light. The room was suffused with colour and warmth.

When Myrto had entered the room, to await her mother, its gay aspect had re-acted on her sensitive Greek nature.

"Oh — Asia"—she cried, in hot, impatient accents,—
"how are we to pass the time till mother comes?" It
seemed to her childish mind as if anything were better than
inaction. If the worst were to befall her — then let it —
but let the doom come quickly. Meanwhile — with all this
sun and brightness about, one could not sit with folded
hands, awaiting grim fate.

Even as she had asked her question, Myrto walked quickly towards a large-backed, ivory chair. Across its seat lay a young lion's skin. This covering Myrto exchanged for a pillow, lying on the nearest couch. Having placed her cushion, she proceeded to sit down upon it, to test its sink-

ing properties. As she sank into its depths, she breathed a gratified sigh. Then she began to spread out her draperies, with a careful elaboration. To sit on high chairs, with one's chiton flowing about one, and with one's foot on a stool, made Myrto feel quite mature and fully grown.

"Softly — child — we who are of age to sit in high chairs and of the rank to use footstools, sit softly, remembering that carved woods and ivories are precious things."

"Asia"—said Myrto, her large eyes were fixed on her slave's face, with a quick affectation of great gravity, and she leaned forward in her chair, her small hands brought together at the finger tips. She had seen her father sit thus, in his more condescending, severe moments—"if I must needs speak my real mind, it is to tell you you are a fool."

Then both laughed — as at an excellent bit of comedy. Myrto had caught her father's very accent and gesture, when he was playing the part of mentor to his quaking household.

"And now"—Myrto went on, still with the perfect mimicry which was one of her small accomplishments, "how would you rather have me prove my point — in a myth, as an old man does to young people — or by means of argument?"

Asia had been making a pretence of dusting the few statuettes about the room. She now stood at her ease, with her hands on her hips, and eyes over-running with laughter.

"The actors themselves — yes, and even Aristophanes should hear you — child."

Myrto narrowed her beautiful eyes and pinched her pouting lips. She was trying to look as much like her father as she could. "As I hold you to be a woman of varied experience, who has learned may things from others, and who has found out many for yourself — I believe you are right."

As Myrto finished her phrase — a perfect copy of her father's lofty language — her childish face changed, as a fresh impulse seized her. She hopped to the ground — she began suddenly to spin about. Round and round she spun, whirling her draperies till they stood about her, stiffened with air.

"See — Asia — I am as large as watery moon — in midsummer," she cried, in her natural voice. Presently she took a plunge downward, to come to a swift upright, on her knees, in the very middle of her successful cheese. Then she laughed, outright. Her childish nature was as light as froth, once more. It was so much easier to be gay than sad! Even the bitter-sweet of love was not a taste one could wish for — every moment of the day. When her mother came in it would be time to be sorrowful. She might as well enjoy this thrill born of the giddy thought of the great coming event.

Hermione caught sight of Myrto as she entered the pastas. The child's laughing radiance, her gay rebound, as she brought her slender shape to an upright, the toss of the spirited golden-crowned head, made Hermione's heart tighten anew, with keen anguish. How passing fair was her darling!

At Myrto's cry — "Ah — here's mother — at last!" Hermione nerved herself to smile. Some of her moral energy had returned to her with the play of her brushes. She kissed Myrto lovingly, with calm eyes.

Myrto started. She did not return the kiss. She had caught sight of her mother's faintly-tinted cheeks. Her mother's care in dressing thus early, brought anew to Myrto, in dreadful clearness, the phantoms of fear she had been fighting all the morning. Never would Hermione have taken the pains to make herself so beautiful, unless something quite terrible was to be said or done.

"Mother, mother"—cried Myrto terror-stricken, with outstretched hands—"What is it that is to happen to me—what is it you wish to say to me?" and she flung herself upon her mother's neck.

Hermione patted the soft, hot cheek, laying her own scarcely less heated, upon it.

"Hush, child! Be calm! Remember the old saying—that there are the gates for us all—the gates that open on the paths of night and day. Who knows but the gate for you may be opening upon the day? Come—let us walk forth—into the sun. We need to quiet our nerves. The air will bring healing—"

Quieted, she scracely knew why or how, save that always her mother had this power of soothing, Myrto let herself be led outward beyond the open door.

The two passed out into the tiny square that did duty for a garden. It had been twice as large only two short years ago. Like so much of Hermione's property that had been eaten and drunk up, the other half had been sold to pay for some of Critias' extravagances.

Small as was the enclosed bit of green, under the warm Athenian sun, it bloomed as brightly as the rich valleys of their own Eubœan fields.

Critias, whose economies always took the form of such acts as might minister directly or indirectly to his own comfort, or to increase of pocket, had forbidden all plants or flowers or even trees to be grown that were purely ornamental. Roses, violets, lilies, narcissi, the sweet-breathed margeraine, cyclamen — these were useful for either chaplets or for funeral wreaths. Peach blossoms, also, in their season, were good to behold on fresh, fair beauties, at one's symposia.

Critias could not, however, stay the flight of birds, nor their instinct for nest-building; nor could he shut out racing clouds across the blue shield of the Athenian sky; nor could he stop bees on their way from Hymettus to their hives in the Attican plains from buzzing loudly about Hermione's carefully tended flowers. So birds twittered and sang, the sky rained brightness and warmth, bees hummed merrily, and the noise and tumult of an eager, restless, passionate-veined people beat in unceasing pulsations upon the resonant Athenian air.

On this lovely Spring morning, the peach trees were in their rosiest bloom. Their shell-like blossoms, tossing in a light wind against the clear azure, made a pink screen. Against these traceries Hermione's delicately-sprigged garments, and the golden yellow of Myrto's chiton were fluttering, as the two walked onward, like larger flowers in motion.

Down the narrow path, between the budding stalks, the two passed, still with their arms about each other. Hermione wore now her most abstracted air. The knot of her anxious thought was gathered in between her brows. As she passed the buds, she fingered them as though asking counsel of nature.

Presently she loosened her arm, to raise it, high above her head. She broke one of the larger branches of a tree, in full blossom. She held it, still in the trance of her thought, above their heads, in lieu of a parasol. For the Spring sun was hot at this hour.

A moment later Hermione found her voice. Above the insect-whirring sounds it broke on Myrto's ear, in its rare note of parental authority.

"There is not in all the world, my child, a moment so important for us women, as that which brings to us the news that our parents have chosen for us the man who is to be our husband—"

Myrto groaned. When her mother took upon her to lecture her thus, the very worst was to follow.

### 244 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

Hermione went on, to gain time: "Sore is the burden God has laid upon us women; sorer yet—a gift worse than death—is an unmated life. Dreadful is such a future—hideous, dishonoured! Old age looms up, a fearful fate—the worst that may befall a woman. To sit in obscurity, while others, our friends, our cousins, our relations, have an honoured place in men's eyes, for as mothers—as housewives—Ah and alas! even as wives we were once honoured"—

"Oh Mother! Mother!" cried Myrto, in feverish tones, "Why lecture me thus? Why not tell me what is before me?"

"Because, my child, it is well you should know these things — because I want you to remember the married woman's portion — and the horror of the unmated. It is better for a woman to be dead than to have no household of her own to manage. To be unprayed for by one's children and one's children's children — no curse of the gods is so fearful."

Myrto laid her cheek on her mother's bare shoulder. She knew full well what was meant. It was to prepare her mind for the very worst.

"Then it will not be Timoleon — mother dear?" she ventured to breathe.

"You are always babbling of Timoleon." (In point of fact it was but the second time Myrto had dared to breathe his name before her mother.) "He is no match for you—or for any one, even one much less high born. His father an exile—the estates confiscated—Timoleon living on a petty sandal shop, with a handful of slaves! Such a match would make you the laughing stock of Athens."

"He is reputed to be clever — mother, and he is noble — and in the best society," Myrto persisted, with a grieving voice.

"Your subtle thinkers are ever beggars! Look at Socrates! As for the best society — Timoleon belongs there — that no one can deny. Yet he lowers himself to turn spy — to be the ear of Alcibiades."

At this point of their talk, mother and daughter had reached a low marble seat; its crescent-curved back, and its lion's claws, lay beneath the one poplar of their little garden. So many late Autumns and early Springs had seen the two seated there, that both sat down, as much from habit, as because of the shade afforded by the thick bushes behind the tree. No sooner were they seated than Hermione put her firm hand on her child's round arm.

"Myrto—you must think no more of Timoleon. You must be reasonable. Have courage. Show me—show the gods you know how to accept your fate."

"Mother—is it so terrible? Oh, who is it?" And Myrto clasped her hands, bending face and shoulders forward, as if to wring the answer from her mother.

"'Tis Ion!"

Myrto sprang to her feet, as though stung. With eyes starting from her lids, with her breath hardening on her lips, her nostrils wide apart, she looked, as she stood before her mother, a breathing statue of outraged pride.

"Ion — the son of Crates — of the Piræus?" she cried out, in a tone of horror.

"The same." Her mother's voice was as laden with resignation as was Myrto's with hot anger. Myrto's voice—one new to her mother—rang out now, with a trumpet-like resonance.

"Ion? I am to wed Ion—a low-bred, low-born shipmerchant's son? Mother—are you mad? Is my father crazed? Timoleon no match for me?—and yet is the son of a low tradesman given me as my soul's companion! Oh mother, mother! Let me die first, and so end my miseries."

## 246 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

In the passion of her high-wrought feeling, Myrto flung herself at her mother's feet. She buried her head in Hermione's lap, in a burst of weeping. Hermione wisely attempted, at first, merely to soothe and quiet the sobbing girl. Her talk of persuasion would come later.

Even as she soothed her Myrto, above her bowed head, as in a vision, Hermione saw other figures than those of stately lily and blooming rose-stalk, quivering in the noon radiance.

The vision of her own youth rose up, clear and plainly imaged. The noble, ancestral house — so old it had stood in the very Agora; her mother's stately presence in the court where she had reigned and ruled, equal in authority, as she was in birth and fortune, to her distinguished husband, and treated as such: her father's importance in Athens as one of its most noted, influential citizens, as one of the Alcmæonids whose magnificence had rebuilt the Silver Gates of the great Temple at Delphi — Ah! the happy, sheltered, joyous youth! — these honoured parents!

Could a contrast be grimmer, more poignantly sorrowful than her life, after marriage, with Critias?

With the hope and buoyant gaiety of a budding Psyche she had gone to her husband. One by one the illusions of love and happiness had fled. Critias knew but one law for women — the convenient law Pericles, her own hated kinsman, had made — with his deep political designs on men's time and their ambitions. Hermione had lived out her life in this her "Athenian prison." Children had come, to bloom, as did the flowers in this crowded garden, the sole solace of her narrow life. Critias had found a way to strike her even in this — her one holy happiness. When a fourth daughter was born — Critias had revolted.

Hermione awoke, after her sleep following her delivery, to find the newly-born babe gone. Critias' labour had taken the form of economy: he had ordered the girl-babe exposed on the Temple steps.

At this period of their fortunes, Critias' cruel act would have been judged leniently, by most Athenians. Having married an heiress, Hermione's father had proved most amazingly long-lived. Three girls and a son, born in quick succession, and next to no income! Surely few Athenian fathers would find voice to condemn so prudent an act as to place the one girl too many under the care of Theseus.

Hermione had arisen from her bed of pain with a curse on her lips. Hecate had answered her — and her curse had struck her own soul hardest. For a short while after her child was taken, the plague came. Her girl babies, one by one, were carried off. Her arms were all but left empty. Her eldest born alone remained to her, Thrasybulous. Then Juno and Hestia heard her agonized prayers. And Myrto was born. As though to placate Critias, Serapion — the great beauty of the family — had come in the following year. The lost babe, however, had never ceased to be mourned.

Into what houses had she not sent Asia, to search for her lost darling? Into how many a flute-girl's face had she not herself peered — on the occasions of her rare outings — dreading, yet hoping to see some feature, some hint of resemblance! The thought of her child's possible fate darkened every waking moment, as the hope of finding her lit up her darkest hour.

To Myrto's young lips the cup of married misery must now be pressed. How could she bear it? How could she find strength to beat down this agony of rebellion, of hurt pride, and — above all, how nerve her lips to praise this low-born suitor, who was to take her Myrto from her?

Hermione, nevertheless, found her words.

"Who knows, child - but you may grow to love him?

He is amiable and tender—the women say—and he is beautiful to look upon—and now he is famous."

"Is he old, mother?" Myrto's voice bleated, from between the folds covering her mother's bosom, where she had lain her head.

"No, child — quite young — not thirty yet. If you are wise and careful — you may have power over him. Young men are more easily led than a man who is nearer forty "— and her mother sighed. "All rests with you, child," she went on, softly, patting Myrto's beautiful head. "You know how to sing prettily, to dance, and to touch the strings of the cithara — you know more than merely how to weave wool into a garment, or to weigh out the stores for the slaves —"

"You know more than I - mother - and yet -"

"Hush, child!" cried Hermione, with the bitter note in her voice any reference to her own marriage always brought—"times are changed. We wives once had our place—we were the counsellors of men—their companions. It is that vile democrat, it was Pericles who brought us to this Asiatic nullity. Our husbands find it more agreeable, more convenient—to lock us in with the slaves—when they go abroad to air their idleness. But you—in your case—things will be different. Ion will look up to you—for you are noble. If you speak to him fair, he may treat you with respect. Wives higher born than their husbands may still hope to win a fair crown of honour. If he live in the country—away from Athens—"

For the second time since the beginning of their talk, Myrto stood upright. But this time it was to clasp her hands tight. She cried out, with a great ring of joy in her young voice:

"We will live in the country? Mother — Oh mother, darling, shall I have power enough to make him live in the

country?" Myrto was only uttering the cry that lay on the lips of every Athenian woman; since, for women, a life in the country meant comparative freedom from restraint, and a daily walk, at least, under the open sky.

"He rears his own horses, it appears," Hermione went on, impartially. "His father has given him a great estate in Arcadia. He may wish to bring up his children there also." Suddenly Hermione's voice changed, and her eyes started outwards. "One misfortune the gods will avert from you—he is rich enough to rear all the children that may come to you—none need be taken from you!" It was her mother's turn now to have a sob rise in her throat.

Folding her arms about her mother, Myrto cooed lovingly: "Never mind — mother darling — you have had me — and who knows? Perhaps when I am gone, we may find her. Fortune is good — sometimes her wheel turns. If I travel and go as far as Arcadia — but what is Asia trying to tell us?" Asia stood now in the open door of the pastas.

"The. lady Nausicaä is come." There were snapping tones in Asia's voice. Her great eyes shone fierce. The nobly-set head was flung backward, with the haughty pose she had caught from Hermione.

"Ah-h—is there any news?" asked Hermione, hastily, as she rose, wiping away the last traces of her tears.

"Oh — there's news enough. Nausicaä remembers the proverb that 'Once in the olden time the Milesians were brave,' She has proved her bravery once more by flaunting her face in the Market Place," snorted, disdainfully, the old slave.

" Hush — Asia — she'll hear you."

"She'd hear the truth then, for once in her wicked life," grunted Asia, standing aside to let her mistress and Myrto cross the threshold.

# Chapter XXII

### NAUSICAÄ

Nausicaä was leaning, with indolent grace, against the one column that was still, at high noon, in the shade. Two of her women were kneeling at her feet. They were performing the customary ablutions. The perfumed stream poured over the white feet had the quality of density—it played about Nausicaä's robes like a rising cloud. The splendid figure, its breadth of bust and shoulder lines topped by the delicately-modelled head and the expressive-featured face, rose out of the scented mist with the grace and bloom of an opulent flower.

At every turn of the flexible figure a gleam of silver, or of gold, or the deep light of rich gems shone and glittered. The fillet into which the reddish-brown locks were gathered, was of wrought gold and silver, pearl-studded; the clasps confining the low-cut chiton at the shoulders and along the arms, were cloudy agates set about with deep-hued garnets; the swaying ear-rings were exquisitely wrought doves hovering above a tiny Venus. Each of the doves bore a priceless pearl in his beak. The border of the chiton was a mass of embroidery — one marvelled to see as delicate a tissue sustain as heavy a weight of golden bees and silver-wrought flowers.

Nausicaä brought into this mean little court something of the gay tumult, the ceaseless motion, and the excitable stir of the outer Athenian life. The fact that she did was, as she well knew, accounted unto her as a crime. Hermione might have forgiven Nausicaä her beauty; she might even have managed to forget the stain of her foreign birth, her want of Athenian breeding and refinement: it was the shameless independence of life she had brought with her from her Asian-ruled Greek Island that made her relationship a daily disgrace.

Nausicaä presented an unabashed front to the wall of her mother-in-law's hate. She made a point of never stepping her white feet within the Critias' court, unless she had something to gain by the move.

Had Hermione given her consent to this marriage project? Had Myrto's silly little heart been touched by Timoleon's daring? Had Timoleon's presumably impassioned utterances—over the garden wall, for one of Nausicaä's slaves had seen him—had these worked the miracle of revolt in that childish nature? Nausicaä might not be able to unseal Hermione's proud lips, but her own eyes could be trusted to tell her all she wished to know.

Even as she stood waiting for Hermione and Myrto to appear, Nausicaä felt herself to be still tingling with excitement. The streets had been fuller than common. Every shop had been ablaze with news; gossip was as busy on men's lips as were the whir of bees' wings on the hill-slopes of Hymettus. The whole city was thrilling, as one man, with the stirrings of curiosity and of wildest conjecture. Athens, in a word, on this brilliant morning, was experiencing one of her most delectable sensations — she was rioting in a complicated play of emotions centering in a single individual, and that individual one both hated and adored.

Out from the bright-tongued, witty-lipped crowd, Nausicaä and her woman had hurried. To pass from the contagion of the excitable, moving, and moved groups of citizens into the dulness and stagnant pool of Hermione's gynæconitis was like exchanging the gift of life itself for death's rigidity.

Nausicaä's temper proved how little to her liking was her enforced indoor coming. A deep frown darkened her brow. With her white foot extended for the drying process, her impatience burst from her.

"That is right, Chloe, put the parasol out of the sun—
if you can find a spot of shade in this miserable court!
Philippa—you fool!—can't you even fold a veil decently
—without crumpling? One would think you were hired
by the day—at an obol the hour!"

Hermione's stately figure, she now perceived, was moving slowly towards her. Myrto, like a kid following its mother's lead, was at her heels. Nausicaä's look quickly changed. She greeted her relatives with her usual air of superiority and effrontery.

"Ah — mother-in-law — I've brought you a new perfume, as you see. I picked it up on my way — it clears the skin, they say. Such a time as I had getting it! May I perish if I every try to get through the crowds — under the colonnades — again, at mid-day. Such a rush! I thought I should have been mobbed. But — good gracious! Here am I babbling of perfumes, when neither of you — I'll warrant — know the morning's news."

Between her swift sentences, Nausicaä's eyes were scanning the faces before her. The marriage obviously had been talked over;— Hermione was furious, Myrto had been crying—"I must make them talk"— was her quick, inward summary.

Hermione, meanwhile, had led the way silently, to the shaded interior of the pastas. Nausicaä proceeded at once, and as a matter of course, to take her favourite seat and attitude. She threw herself at full length on the one luxurious couch. Propping the pillows behind her, until she

sat at an upright, with her limbs comfortably outstretched, she was now ready to begin.

She would first startle and delight her listeners, and then draw them on.

"You say the Market Place was full this morning?" Hermione remarked, distantly. Her calm, critical eyes watched Nausicaä building her rampart of pillows behind her.

"Full?" Nausicaä echoed, as she gave the last cushions a shove with her elbow—"the streets were packed. Such a rabble! All Athens is in an uproar!" Then she stopped. She also smiled—with tantalizing composure. She made a pretence of re-adjusting a clasp upon her shoulder. Having thrown her bait, it was her pleasure to see the fishes nibble.

"Ah-h—and what is your news?" Hermione asked, eagerly. She disapproved of her daughter-in-law, but she was too true an Athenian not to be bitten by the gnat of curiosity. She leaned forward, her close draperies tight about her knees.

"Is it possible you have not heard that of which all Athens is talking?" cried Nausicaä, ironically, as she arched her slim throat. She was secretly relishing her little moment of triumph.

"The slaves are not all home from market yet," replied Hermione, collectedly, disdaining to notice the scorn in Nausicaä's voice.

"They'll be late then, this morning; for, as I said, Athens is in an uproar." Nausicaä arched her slim throat. She lifted her clever, spirited head in high air. Her voice took on its most supercilious tones. Presently she broke forth:

"Why do you sit here, moping at home, while Athens is making history enough for all the rest of Greece? Thanks

be to Zeus I'm not an Athenian! We women of the colonies know life — don't frown, mother! — As long as you live, the catalogue of good women won't be exhausted. Yes — yes — I'm coming to my point — which is more than the philosophers do. But really, haven't you heard?" and Nausicaä gasped, in well-feigned horror, as she threw up her hands.

"You forget—we are allowed to go out but seldom." Hermione, as she drew her noble form to a more rigid posure, looked more like a statue than ever. Her very draperies seemed turned into stone.

"Not allowed!" burst forth the uncontrollable Nausicaä, lifting her chin. "Great Jupiter! A fine joke that—asking one's husband to go out. In Ionia such a question would make a woman a laughing stock—"

"The ways of the Ionian Islands are not the ways of the nobility of Athens," said Hermione, in her iciest tone, leaning back in her chair, her hands clasping the ivory inlaid lions' heads.

"Indeed they are not," cried the unabashed young foreigner. "Dull indeed should we be if they were. Little wonder your husbands are always abroad — and in the society of —"

"Nausicaä — silence!" In her anger, Hermione's cheeks burned fiery red through her light rouge.

"Well—well—I was only about to make a joke. There's no sin in that," cried Nausicaä, pouting like an angry child. Then she laughed outright. The knowledge of all she knew, and all she withheld, was like oil upon a heaving water surface. Did she but choose—what an awakening she could bring! About Critias! About Myrto—and the modest child's stolen interviews! But what use in getting angry with one who preferred to sit in ignorance? One must talk to such women as Hermione as one would to

children. She would go on with her tale. Later on she would make Hermione tell her all she wanted to know.

"Well then - you must know," and Nausicaä settled herself still more comfortably among her pillows - she patted the folds of her gown contentedly, for she dearly loved the telling of a long tale—"that just as I was passing the Stoa, near the Kolonos - it was shady there, and I kept as near to the houses as I could, and well it was for me I did - otherwise I and my women might have come forth flat as cakes — what should we hear but a loud shout as loud as the roar of battle. Tust as I had turned my head to look at the sprigs on the gown of that flute-girl - every one is calling her the new beauty - those flute-girls always have the latest inventions, whatever one may think of their beauty — well, behind us came this noise, loud enough to wake the dead. Out from the Agora, on this side of the Ceramicus, hundreds and hundreds were hurrying, rushing pell-mell, as though the furies were behind them - towards the Prytanieum ---"

"Oh-h—of course—Hipparate was to go before the Archon this morning \*," excitedly interrupted Hermione. Both she and Myrto were now leaning forward on their chairs, with eyes wide with eagerness.

"Exactly," confirmed Nausicaä, with a superior nod of her head. "She was to go in person—to present, as is usual, the causes which entitle her to her divorce. Well—I had the luck to see her go in—her brother, and the Archon—all went in together." Nausicaä emphasized her words with pats on her embroidered robe covering her pointed knee.

"How did she look? Frightened? Abashed? Sad? Poor Hipparate! What a plight for a modest woman to

\*This incident, as related by Plutarch, is said to have transpired just prior to the departure of Alcibiades for Ephesus.

come to!" Hermione's cheeks were crimson. Her voice was full of loving sympathy. In the excitement of the moment Myrto had flung herself beside her mother. The two clasped each other close — their draperies melted as one.

"You may well say so," purred Nausicaä, as though modesty were her own pet virtue. "She looked her tragedy, I can tell you. She was veiled from head to foot, with her head bowed, as though she was following a corpse."

"And so she was—the corpse of her married happiness!" Hermione's voice seemed to be chanting the dirge of her own married joys, as her arm tightened about Myrto. But Nausicaä's flute-like tones rang on, unheeding. She was indeed, greatly enjoying the scene. Her sense of humour was keen. To make her two listeners quake and thrill at the news she brought them from the haunts of men—knowing how they scourged her behind her back for her shameless ways—was the relish to the sauce of her satisfaction.

"Well — my dear mother — to be rid of Alcibiades, one might think, would call rather for pæons than dirges. Hipparate's ideal of life can now be realized — she can spend all her life at home — alone, and in chastity." Nausicaä gave Hermione a peculiar, slanting look, with lips curving with mischievous meaning.

Hermione leaned back in the deep curve of her chair. Myrto's head sank upon the beautiful shoulder. Hermione had recaptured her calm, and with her calm, her iced dignity. "Did you also see Alcibiades?" She lifted cool eyes to Nausicaa's impertinence.

"Oh — that was enough to make one curse one's luck! I missed him by not more than a minute. I had just turned into the nearest street, to get out of the crowd and its jostling, when — but — in Heaven's name — what noise is that?"

With a common impulse the women rose to their feet. Hermione's and Nausicaä's eyes were interlocked. Wonder, excitement, fear — the startled eyes as they met, said all and more than this. Hostility died out. They were women with a common fate — a common passion.

The noisy tumult — to those Athens-born — the bustle and cries to all dwellers, indeed, in that drama-yielding city could mean but one thing. A great event was happening, and all Athens was thrilling to it!

Hermione, with swift strides, had now reached the garden path. Nausicaä and Myrto were close upon her heels. Though they could see naught, yet the best chances of their hearing, at least an echo of the tumult beating upon the air, was to stand within the little garden paths.

Over the tall garden walls came the sounds of rustling garments, and of sandalled feet, rushing onwards. Cries, exclamations, and bursts of laughter would rise, like a loud and boisterous wind, from some of the groups hurrying past. Graver tones, freighted with awed wonder, succeeded to the more explosive mirth. Then all would be still. Through the narrow alley on which the garden opened, these groups of excited citizens had passed, the quicker to gain the broader dromos.

"Oh — is there no way of looking out upon the street?" cried Nausicaä. She was fairly wringing her hands in despair.

She faced her relatives for the first time with longing, almost loving looks. Hermione returned the wild gaze.

Myrto turned from the shrubs nearest to the walls, to face her mother with beaming eyes.

"Oh mother! I hear voices — one can hear all that is said!"

The two ladies hurried toward Myrto.

"Where - where is the best place?" They turned ap-

pealing eyes to Myrto, as though questioning an authority.

Myrto squeezed herself closer to the wall and did not think it necessary to explain how her knowledge had been gained.

Up from the street, to the women's outstretched ears, came broken, disjointed sentences, ejaculations, gasps of mingled wonder and horror.

"I tell you 'tis true," cried a strong assured voice. "He took Phocia, Irene, and Korinna — the latter out of pity — doubtless, and gratitude — to see how painted columns look, in a gentleman's house."

"Surely you do not mean he took these creatures to his house?" ejaculated a younger voice, in a tone of horror.

"That is the truth in a nutshell. Like a true artist, he wished for new backgrounds, doubtless." The first speaker's witticism won him a chorus of admiring laughter.

"By the offended majesty of Juno! I call the act an atrocious one," cried some one, hotly, the tones thrilled with indignation.

"Hipparate — you see — was exactly of your opinion — for she left him."

The first speaker sniffed, as he threw his head back. "Even the gods — blessed be they one and all — may count too much on human patience. And Alcibiades is but mortal. Being mortal, he argued persumably that, since Hipparate had borne so much, she would bear more. He took one fatal step, it appears — too far. Hipparate — as he now knows — is but mortal."

"And he—an Immortal," cried out suddenly, a clear sonorous voice. At the sound of the ringing accents, both Nausicaä and Myrto started. Nausicaä paled beneath her rouge and Myrto blushed. The voice went on. "Who else would dare defy gods and men? Who else—before the very throne of justice itself, would have outraged the

law, have openly scorned the presence of King Archon and have picked up his wife, laughing, as though the whole proceedings were a play — and have carried her bodily out into the public places? The ways of Alcibiades are the ways of the gods themselves — I tell you — I —"

"Hear! Hear!"

"Evoé! Evoé!" a dozen admiring, derisive tongues cried, and the group apparently circled closer in about Timoleon—for it was he.

A prolonged murmurous applause greeted this outburst.

"He'll lead us to ruin — if he goes on with the mad Sicilian adventure," a rough voice broke in, stopping the chorus of cheers.

"He'll lead Athens to glory! We shall rule the world — once Sicily is ours!" was Timoleon's shouting rejoinder.

A confused clamour of cries and shrill-tongued voices filled the street. Quarrelling, shouting war talk, the crowd broke, and moved down towards the street of Hermes. The voices grew fainter and fainter.

The three ladies swept from their hiding. With ears tingling with the excitement of the street scene, with minds and spirits strung to fever-point by all they had heard, they hurried towards the quiet pastas.

Once seated, their draperies carefully spread out, their faces were a blank; they were ready now for Critias, should he appear, and his dreaded inspection. Though not a syllable was interchanged concerning the great event, even Nausicaä had no intention of drawing down upon herself a parental outburst by any betraying signs of the garden episode.

All three talked at once, as they waited for Critias. Hermione saw in her great kinsman's audacity the prophecy of a double doom — a new obstacle to women's having justice done them, as well as the larger fear of what Alcibiades

## ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

260

might bring upon Athens — were he indeed to rule the city, and to begin this new war. Nausicaä took a man's lighter, wider view of Hipparate's tragedy.

"Humph — this will make him as popular as though he had invented a new dance — or philosophy. We Athenians love novelties"— and then she quickly pictured to herself how she herself would arrange her draperies were Thrasybulous ever taken with a similar impulse for making a public exhibition of his marital power. At least she would never let her feet dangle.

Myrto's young soul was shaken with mingled fear and dazed amazement. Although she too talked, volubly, inwardly, she had made up her mind to give up Timoleon, and even to throw his garland away, and at once. One now, knew not what might happen. Surely no woman or maiden could feel safe. Were her father to know of that wonderful garden-scene — poor Myrto! — her very soul seemed to grow pale with fear.

# Chapter XXIII

#### A FAMILY SCENE

AFTER listening, with admirably feigned innocence, to Critias' meagre details of the Alcibidian episode — details arranged strictly with a view to what it was proper mere women should hear — of that which was agitating all Athens — and after wasting time in the playing of the usual feminine comedy of deceit, Nausicaä had managed to rid the room of Hermoine and Myrto. She feigned hunger — and the necessity of being at home, to greet her husband on his return from a cock-fight, at Sunion.

Hermione had instantly hastened to the kitchen — Myrto following at her heels. Nausicaä, at last, had the room and her father-in-law to herself.

She had quickly dropped to her knees, beside Critias. Lifting her spirited, mobile face, she crept close to the bent, wondering eyes. "Dear, dear Critias, tell me, and quickly—for she may come back at any moment—tell me—is this marriage with Ion to go through?"

Critias smiled down at the lovely face so close to his. He disapproved of his daughter-in-law, but it was beyond a man's power not to feel her attraction. "And why should you be so curious — my young beauty — about this marriage?"

Nausicaä arched her long neck. "And why should I not? Is Ion not to become one of us?"

Critias laughed aloud. This Ionian's pride! But Critias started. His hand suddenly released Nausicaä. He moved towards the hangings screening the court. For his

ears had caught sounds that rang like soothing music to his excitement.

Along the plastered floor of the arcades he had heard the tripping of a well-known, much-beloved step. The sound brought disgust and quick anger to Nausicaä. All her deep planning was brought to naught. To tell Timoleon, Myrto was surely to wed Ion was her one longing — one hope of happiness — and now! —

Meanwhile, a lad not much more than twelve was bounding towards Hermione, just issuing from the thalamos. The boy was clad in a short tunic. On his head he wore a crown of blossoms. In his hand he was waving, as though in triumph, a sprig of myrtle. He ran straight into his mother's arms. After receiving her tight embrace, he rushed towards the pastas, to fling himself as impetuously upon his father's breast.

Critias stooped. He kissed the boy with passionate fervour.

Releasing him, but still holding him at arm's length, Critias cried, in a voice no one ever heard, save when he spoke to this, his true idol:

"And what have we learned at school to-day, my Sera-

The boy's face in a moment was aglow. He blushed, as he cast down his eyes.

"I took my first lesson in the Pyrrhic dance, Sir. And so well did I perform my part that the master gave me this"— and Serapion held up his sprig of myrtle, "and the boys crowned me." The boy blushed again, with a maiden's modesty. It was Critias's boast that no young noble in all Greece could match his son in perfection of breeding and training. No expense had been spared to make him beautiful, to keep him modest, and to give him strength. He was, in truth, the very image of modesty.

"You must show us what you can do, later on," said Critias looking at the lad, with swimming eyes. His loving admiration of his son touched the point of idolatry. "You may go and play now — I need to say a word with your mother."

"Come, Myrto," cried Serapion, taking, as usual, the initiative with his sister.

Myrto had stood watching the familiar scene. She must wait for her moment, until her father released Serapion. He now began to drag Myrto along by her chiton.

"Serapion," Myrto whispered, as she hurried onwards, "go to the column opposite the kitchen, and hide there."

"Why?" Serapion eyed her suspiciously.

"Because I have something amazing to tell you."

Serapion threw upwards his bright, intelligent glance. Perceiving that Myrto was not lying, he strode before her. He took his seat at the base of a certain column both had found best suited to confidential moments.

"Well — and what's this new disturbance?" asked Serapion, half petulantly. He was in haste to begin a showingoff of his acquirements.

"Oh!" cried Myrto, with a quick gasp, "it's most important news." Myrto gathered her elbows together, in the palms of both hands, and rocked her body. It was her way of showing excitement.

"I know — it's that story about Alcibiades —"

"No — we know that — too. It's much more astounding. I — I — I am going — to — be — married."

Serapion threw back his blossom-crowned head. "Ha! Ha! that's a very good joke!" and his boyish laughter rang out.

"But I tell you, in the name of the gods, it is true," cried Myrto, indignantly, with a falling lip. She was half

ready to cry. Serapion was not taking the great news in the least as she had expected.

"And whom have they got to marry you?" asked the teasing Serapion.

"I'm to marry Ion, the son of Crates — the richest of all the ship-merchants, and —"

"In the name of the gods! Are you not ashamed to figure before all Athens as a common merchant's wife?" almost screamed the boy. He rose — in his quick anger and disgust he struck at her arm, angrily, with his myrtle branch.

Myrto answered hotly. She also had risen; she faced Serapion with flaming eyes. "He is not a merchant—he is only a merchant's son—and he won the prize at Olympia—for charioteering. His horses are—they are famous—and he is clever—he can turn a couplet and guess riddles—and he is rich." To her own surprise Myrto found herself the advocate, and a hot, impassioned advocate of her unknown suitor.

A change came over Serapion's beautiful, flushed face. He gave his sister serious eyes and a sober look.

"You say he is the Ion who won the quadriga race?" and he narrowed his luminous eyes. "I remember, now, we boys were talking about him—in the palestræ—only yesterday. You are right—he is well known, and well spoken of, if it be the Ion whose horses are so renowned. That alters matters. Do you think he will lend me a horse?"

"We will give you two!" cried Myrto, superbly. "We are to live in the country. I mean to make him fond of me—so that I may do with him as I like. And since I have made up my mind to that—I am willing to marry him. You shall come and stay with us."

"Very well," Serapion assented, with a lad's important air of being fully grown—"If I like the horses he gives

me, I will come and stay with you — for a year — when I am a man of leisure. What colour shall the horses be?"

The two children bent their heads close together, as they proceeded to settle the grave question of the prospective horses' colour.

Meanwhile, under the upper end of the arcade the husband and wife were slowly walking. "Have you told Myrto?" had been Critias' first question. His eyes were calm and controlled once more.

"Yes — she knows and accepts her doom," Hermione had answered, with a drop in her voice, as she moved beside her lord.

"Pooh! Doom! You are ever for a wearing of the tragic mask. She'll be a lucky girl, as she will find, once she is married to so courteous, handsome, and rich a man as Ion. He'll prove a husband in a thousand. Those low-born men are soft on their women. By the way — hem! — you must now tell her to keep quiet about the matter."

"Oh-h Critias, and is the marriage off?" Hermione cried, in joyful tones, her heart leaping within her. She faced her husband with shining, radiant eyes.

"No-o — but I saw Crates this morning. He tells me Ion would like to be free for a few weeks yet. He appears to be very sensible of the honour we confer upon him." Critias now put on his most impressive swagger. Once more he resumed his stroll. "I quite agreed with him. Myrto ought to be sixteen — at least, before she marries."

"Oh — you are good — you are good!" cried Hermione. Her heart was overflowing with rapture. She could have embraced her husband — surely he had arranged the matter thus — to please her. He had seen how great was her sorrow at losing her darling. What a quick answer to prayer! Apollo — the dear god! should have a rich offering. She would go, on the morrow, to the priest's house, herself.

Strange — that his name should come, just now, from her husband's lips. The god must be actually hovering over them! Hermione felt a thrill of pious rapture.

"By Apollo himself! — how the boy dances!" her husband cried out.

Under the bright, white light, shaded by the drawn awning, in and out among the white columns, Serapion was indeed dancing. As he poised his body, first on one foot, then on another, pointing his steps in time with the rhythm of the war-song he was humming, he looked and was the very incarnation of symmetrical grace. The slender, lithe shape; the supple muscles, trained to perfect response of any change or posture; the skin, embrowned, of a beautiful tone, and already hard as marble, face and limbs radiant with the brilliancy of blooming youth — it was little wonder that such a breathing statue of loveliness, instinct with rhythmic motion, should have made the whole household, now assembled under the arcades, break forth into a pæon of rapture.

But all the praise was not given to Serapion. Myrto's high-strung mood had found its vent in an unwonted moment of self-forgetfulness. The ode on her brother's lips had sent the thrill of a musical impulse to burst into song on her own account.

Seizing a lute a slave had been cleaning and re-stringing, and had brought with her into the court, Myrto struck a few chords on its silken strings. In an instant Serapion had changed his own steps to take hers — one he had taught her long ago.

"Well done — Myrto, my daughter!" Critias cried out, as both the children swept onward. Myrto, as she passed her father, was in full, sweeping spring — her head well back, her hair loosened and flying, her draperies full of wind. For perfection of rhythm her movements equalled her

brother's trained step. In the Panathenæ Myrto's dancing in honour of Athena had been greatly admired.

Critias caught the lovely creature to him. For the first time since she could remember, Myrto felt her father's lips upon her brow. Even after kissing her he did not release her. Holding her by the shoulders, he looked down into her averted eyes, forcing them back to meet his.

"You'll be a bride in a thousand, for any young husband — and prettier still with six months' fuller growth. Come — give me a kiss."

Myrto felt as though she should sink through the floor of the court. To be noticed — and in public, before every one, and by her father! When she lifted her cheek to receive his salute, it was as cold as marble.

The noon meal was the most joyous that had been eaten in the Critias household for many a day. Every one had a secret satisfaction to hug. Hermione had her Myrto back again. Nausicaä felt her grip tightened on Timoleon, for he was her latest lover; Myrto was sure she could make Ion love her — and perhaps later — both Timoleon and Serapion might come and visit them, in their estates in Arcadia. For, in her innocence, to Myrto such projects seemed as easy as to make figures with her bread, her pet table habit.

Critias's own satisfaction was also complete. With the marriage portion safe in Athena's Treasury, he could borrow as much money as he pleased. He could give two banquets instead of one, during the festival time.

Clotho, that skilled spinner of men's fates, was busy with her secret, dark designs. As though in sinister sport, far and wide she had cast her dread threads. For a Corinthian merchant lay dying, and Maia would soon be free.

## Chapter XXIV

#### THE BREATH OF MARS

WITH his marriage postponed till mid-winter, Ion lived his life as never he had lived it before. His banquets, cock fights, and bets succeeded each other with a ruinous rapidity. Never had he so loved his horses, never had he so delighted in the exhilaration yielded by vigorous athletics. And yet—and yet—and yet—something was lacking—there was a note that could sing in his soul and that had sung, and that now was silent. What could it be, in this luxurious, brilliant Athenian existence that was lacking?

A hundred times had Ion been on the point of journeying to Corinth. Yet, never did the shade fall that seemed a feasible one. Twice he had sent Persia, on a special mission, to Maia; the letters he bore were to be delivered in utmost secrecy. Persia had returned from his last journey with news that sent Ion's pulses to wild beating; Nirias, Maia wrote, was dying and of a mortal disease. Not even the gods, now, could help him. Should he indeed die, then Ion must be prepared to open wide his arms. What home for Maia was there save there—in the nest of his love? Once she was free, she would, indeed, fly to Athens. Meanwhile, she bade Ion pray to the gods for patience;—she needed the help of prayers. This was "her dark hour." The only light, in this her land of darkness, was the "flashing fiery glow" of their love.

Such words stirred Ion to mingled emotions. Maia he desired, with all the powers of his soul and body. After

having known her, no other woman could satisfy, could yield the full of bliss. Yet, did she indeed make good her promise, what would happen? He, alas, would no longer be free! That hateful nuptial tie would, only too surely, be irrevocably tied, and within the year.

After such reflections, Ion would pour down neat wine, to drown thought, at the banquets and then swear because even Bacchus would not bless him with oblivion.

The breath of Mars, however, was to bring Ion a fever of forgetfulness that the wine cup could not yield.

Ion, as well as Athens, was thrilling to the strongest, to the most powerful of human passions. The war madness was upon the city. The passionate speeches of Nicias and Alcibiades, that had aroused to frenzied excitement all Athens in the assembly, were re-told in every court, farm house, and shepherd's huts, on the hillslopes. Athens was longing to rush onward to battle, as a Mænad to worship. Athena's mighty shield, with its sculptured figures breathing of slaughter, and horror, and carnage, had no terrors for this renewed youth of Athens, with its full treasuries, its golden harvests, its gymnasia bursting with young vigorous manhood, and its belief in its all-conquering fleet and mighty army.

Ion, and all of his set, were caught in the sweep and fury of the mounting madness. Glaucus, Ariston, and above all others Timoleon, each in their different ways, were seized with the universal contagion for furthering the enterprise.

In this tumultuous sea of action Timoleon swam, as in his true element. His time and moment, he felt, were come. The opportunity to prove to his great leader, the value of his gifts, and the resources of his talents, he could fully, he felt, at last, demonstrate, after long waiting.

Timoleon was a dozen men, in a dozen different places. He was in the Agora, early and late; he haunted the porticoes; he could be heard haranguing an audience wherever one was to be gathered.

Timoleon had the gift of true oratory; he caught the flame of his own skillfully worked enthusiasms. His words sung eloquently in his own ears. He was the first victim of his admirably marshalled argumentation. Personal conviction had little to do with his intensity; he caught the glow from his own richly coloured oratory. His enthusiasm was lighted from within. Greed lured at fiery-featured ambition; together they fashioned brilliant wings to Timoleon's oratory.

His candour, his assumed frankness, his knowledge of how to play upon other men's lower passions and greed, were part of his power. Timoleon, for example, in the role of trying to please and convince old men, was something new; yet he had thus won innumerable adherents. When Nicias' smooth, specious arguments were terrorizing the more timid, Timoleon developed extraordinary powers of persuasion.

"Is it Themistocles, Cimon, Pericles, and his great disciples — his true ward — Alcibiades, who are to be heeded? — or is Nicias to be listened to, with his womanish, non-interfering policy? What do ye wise old heads think would become of Athenian energies, ambitions, ideals, if pious, cowardly Nicias were to rule our City?" Timoleon's mocking malice cut even deeper than his eloquence.

"Nicias listens to soothsayers, he is the slave of magic. Alcibiades puts his ear to Athens heart,—its beat and throb and those of his own pulse are one. His trust is in our Lady of Athens."

A group of elderly white haired men, seated in a half-moon, under the columns of the gymnasia listened, open-mouthed to Timoleon's malicious contrasts.

"What a fighter thou art! my Timoleon. If Greece be not mistress of Sicily in a six months time, 'tis not because

thou art not giving Nicias uneasy hours!" was Ion's out-burst.

Timoleon laughed, silently, as he glanced backwards. He could indulge in laughter. He had left the old men drawing diagrams of Sicily, in the sand, with their canes.

Ion and Timoleon left the circle of these elderly citizens. Timoleon having sown his seed, could trust it to ripen.

The two young men swept onward, through the columns of the great peristyle. The disputatious voices of the philosophers followed them, as they passed into the Ephebeion.

Here the familiar sounds were of another sort. There was the pounding of the strong fists on the sacks filled with chaff — athletes practicing thus before beginning to wrestle. In the Conisterium, sharp young voices were calling to attendants for prompt sprinkling; — one could hear the dash of sand against firm, naked bodies; and, in the inner xyste — in the depressed central part, below the raised platforms — the usual scene confronted Timoleon's and Ion's eyes.

The number of wrestlers here was amazing, and all were in fine form. There was scant space for all, for the place was crowded. There was the sound of short, panting breathing; of swift rushes; of the deadly grip and groan, as athletes, clasped together in tight coil, came to earth, with a thud, continuing their contest on the ground. These sounds were ever and anon drowned. For shouts and passionate outcries arose from the crowds, gathered thick under the covered spaces.

Eager, tensely knit, were the bent faces of the spectators. Every looker-on had his favourite, in that struggling mass of oiled and sanded bodies. The brutal sport of the pancrationists delighted these Greek eyes.

One athlete had his antagonist's throat between thumb and finger; his mighty legs straddled the writhing body.

"Choke him! Choke him! No mercy. Remember he

broke Eudemes's leg but yesterday!" cried, in savage voice, a man close to Ion's shoulder. The cry was taken up. The demand for cruel punishment, became a chorus. A group of Furies seemed yelling vengeance.

Timoleon raised himself on his tip-toes. His keen eyes peering over men's shoulders, into the open space, were fixed, with singularly intensity, on the swollen muscles, on the purplish face, and on the convulsive agonized motions of the man who was getting the worst of the sport.

"Is not that Thrasybulous?" he said, in an aside to Ion, nodding to the mass that was a man.

"The very same," answered Ion, in an equally low voice. This view of his future brother-in-law was not one calculated to enkindle warmth of feeling.

Ion gave a humourous side-glance. "With such an athlete in one's family, my boy —" he began — but he covered the sentence with, "Come, let us be off — you'll do no talking here."

Timoleon's smile was enigmatic, as he swept Ion's shoulder with his arm.

He proposed, if this war turned out as he hoped it would, to have Thrasybulous placed in the front of battle—he would pass the hint to Alcibiades—that particular member of the Critias household would be as well left on the deck of a war trireme.

The mere thought of what the war might bring — union with that sweet Myrto — and the comfort of her dowry, warmed Timoleon. His next words came gaily.

"Well, my Ion, once the war is upon us, and such training as that will be as useless as maiden's playing at ball."

A voice answered, from a near standing group, "Ah-h—Timoleon, you speak of the war as though it was indeed a certainty," and Agonides laughed, with light mockery.

Timoleon turned, squared himself, as he faced Agonides,

with his most alluring smile. He was careful to edge his way close to the group, behind the speaker. His chance had come,—and he closed with it. The group clustered—gathered—he had his true audience at last.

The familiar arguments were gone over. Every point bearing on the situation was skillfully elaborated. Athens owed it to herself—to her allies, to fight; her inaction was working mischief. Sparta was already presuming on Athens' inertia. It was high time Athens proved to Sparta—to all the world she was as mighty as ever, could strike where she would, could hold and force submission. Any pretext would serve to teach the Peloponnesians that needed lesson.

"For the real object of the war is the capture and conquest of Sicily."

The group stirred. The faces wore changed looks. Eyes sought eyes — half terrified, yet secretly pleased. Timoleon's boldness was refreshing. So many had thought this — yet none — as yet, had dared openly affirm the truth.

Ion breathed hard. He looked at Timoleon with new admiration. Timoleon went on — "The merchant's houses are heaped with rich stuffs and jewels. The city streets, the theatres, the gymnasium, all men say of Syracuse, are almost as crowded with statues of the gods, as are Corinth and Athens. Not a soldier, not a hoplite, not even a baggage slave but will come back from the war as rich as a Persian satrap.

"To know as great Island, one as rich and powerful, and yet not ours, is surely humiliation for Athens. As lords of the sea, how can we live and yet know our sovereignty disputed? — Set at naught by these rude Sikels? Surely, we are entitled, by the very superiority of our dominion, to demand and receive tribute from all Islands."

"This, our Empire of Athens, O men of Athens! demands this extension of her power. How can we hope to

strike terror to Sparta? how impress the world except by presenting fresh proofs of our power? Surely, the first duty of the great, of the strong, is to go to the rescue of the weak. For her own good — for the good of the world, if only to bring peace where all is discord — the Empire of Athens should own Sicily. The distracted Island needs to be owned and governed by those who understand the art of ruling — by wise Athenians whom mighty Pallas Athena guides and protects."

The clever Athenian faces about Timoleon were affame. The right chords had been touched. Ambition — patriotism — greed — what more was needed to stir men to a warfever?

Even those who were of the peace-party showed dubious, doubting brows. Dull, indeed, it would be to remain at home, with flat purses, and to witness, in bitterness, the return of mean slaves, of obscure contractors, of pipers and singers even, swollen with plunder! The prospect tempted the greatest lover of agreeable inaction to shout for war.

These flaming eyes and thought-worked brows were Timoleon's true plaudits. He had made his stroke. He was now bent on other business.

"I go towards the Plain, my Ion, and where go you?" he asked, with a meaning smile, as he turned toward the latter.

"And I to meet a prospective father-in-law"— Ion answered, his eyes shining with laughter. In less than a month now, his marriage would come off, and surely Timoleon, of all his friends, should be among the first to be advised.

Ion could never have believed the prospect of marrying could make him so merry — for Timoleon's face had lost its glow — he had taken on one more familiar. He walked along with something of his old, supercilious indifference.

"And whom, pray, is the fortunate maiden? Has your father — has the merchant-king selected a bride?"

Ion gave Timoleon's somewhat scornful features an amused smile.

"It appears it is rather the maiden's father who wishes the match." And Ion felt a quick relish at the thought of his coming announcement.

"And this most discerning of fathers — a wealthy Piræan — I presume?" Timoleon, for the life of him, could not help a certain disdain tinging his tone.

Ion's eyes gleamed.

"It is an Athenian, as it happens, old man."

"May one learn his name?" Timoleon's face was now pushed out, beyond his tall cane. For he had stopped, and was facing Ion.

Ion hesitated. Then his eyes sparkled, once again, with mirth. "Yes—if you are discreet. But it is not to be talked about—as yet—"

"I promise —"

"Well—it is Critias—if you must know. He has promised his daughter Myrto. Have you ever chanced, at any of the festivals, to see her?" Ion's tone, indifferent as he tried to make its accents, was full of pride.

The effect of his announcement Ion could not possibly have foreseen. With a crash, Timoleon's cane fell to the ground. As he stooped to re-capture it, Timoleon crimsoned.

Ion eyed his friend's discomfiture with amazement. Timoleon's usually perfectly composed features were perceptibly disturbed. His under-lip visibly trembled. A pallor had succeeded the scarlet hue. Never had Timoleon displayed such uncontrolled feeling — save when the dice had gone too heavily against him — in Ion's long years of acquaintance. Ion thought it best to banter.

"Well — well — and what does all this mean? What have you to say — for or against the match — I should like to know! You appear singularly moved — what has been going on in my absence?" Ion's laughter was light. His manly eyes, however, were now scanning his friend's face, with keen shrewdness.

Timoleon threw his head back; he gave a fresh fling to his mantle. "In one sense, Ion, I am delighted, of course. It will be a great match — for both of you."

"Well—if you turn white and red each time you hear of a friend's marriage—flushing and paling like a girl—all I can say is—"

"What an absurdity! Of course I — we — shall all be sorry to lose you —"

"Oh, I'm not buried yet," Ion cried out, joyously.

"No-o, but Critias will want to hurry the match, that I foresee, and the reasons for it. As for my turning red—Ah-h—here they come!" Timoleon had now entirely recovered himself. Yet his face visibly brightened as he turned toward the group of young men whose slow saunter under the great trees had finally brought them close to their side.

"Not a word — you understand — Timoleon," Ion cried, hastily, as the group came slowly towards them.

"Not a syllable," gravely responded Timoleon.

Yet he was counting the hours before he could possibly get a message to Nausicaä—she, surely, must have known something of this or should know—

Ion, as he smiled down at his friends, was also saying inwardly, with conviction: "There's more in this than he will confess—I must find out his secret. Ah—Glaucus!" he cried, "you've worn the mantle I brought—I see. Yes—it is a fine shade. It becomes him amazingly—does it not?"

Glaucus lifted languid eyes to the admiring gaze of his followers.

But Glaucus had brought news, and even fine garments were disregarded.

"I say — dear men — do you remember that beauty — the one who came with your father, Ion, to the Dionysia — and was in the train of two other old men?"

It was Ion's turn to mount a flush. He could hardly command his tongue, as he stammered, "Well — my Glaucus — and what new infidelity has my father been committing?"

Above the shout of the gay laughter, Glaucus, who was too interested to stammer, cried "The news has nothing to do with your father, as yet — But, on the contrary, with Manes."

"With Manes!" exclaimed the young men, in chorus. And now Ion was feeling his heart in his throat. For it was he who had brought Manes, from the Isthmus, to costume the chorus for "Electra"—he being choregus, at the coming Dionysia. And what, in the name of all the gods of chance, had this chorus-master, to do with divine Maia?

Glaucus was presently telling them.

"Well, you see, those of us who keep our ears open, hear. in time all we desire to learn. I should never have gone down the shades in peace, had I not had the mystery cleared up, concerning the most beautiful woman I ever saw. And now I know her history! Oh-h you needn't look so hungry — my Ion — I intend to be more generous than were you — for whatever your father told you about her, you were both as close as a mean man with your knowledge.

"Well — I see you are all bursting, and so I'll proceed. Manes and I have been sitting this good hour, on the steps of the Theseum. The holy place made him talk. It appears this wonderful creature's name is Maia. And of all

wonders, she is Athenian born. He — Manes — of Corinth — found her on the night of the festival of the Panathenæ in our Ceramicus. She was an exposed child. And he took her and carried her to Corinth. There he trained her. She became famous as a flute-player and dancer. That rich old Nirias, the famous wool merchant, you've all heard of his art collection — well, he added a living statue to his collection. He fell in love with Maia, bought, and freed her. And lately, on his death bed, he has married her. And as soon as her house can be sold, she is to come to Athens, and will live here."

The young men, all save Ion, made a chorusing series of remarks. Some avowed they should do their best to be the first to meet as great a heroine, others secretly made a vow to marry her. Ion alone was silent. The news of Maia's freedom, and of her approaching arrival had temporarily stunned him.

The gates of love, of happiness seemed to close, before his very eyes. He could have no more part in this coming of lovely Maia than if he had been buried.

He turned from the laughing group with a new bitterness in his heart, one new to him. And out of his angry disgust, he poured out his gall upon his father. "Oh-h father! father! why indeed could you not leave me alone—in my happiness?"

With the tears smarting upon his lids, he went his way sorrowfully.

For Critias had intimated to Crates that the month Gamelion was near, and the time must be set for the bethrothal banquet.

## Chapter XXV

#### A BETROTHAL

"MARRY her — the quicker the better!" had been Hermione's outburst, a few days before Critias had last seen Crates.

Hermione was wearied of moping looks and listless ways. She was at the end of her patience. Myrto, for some weeks, had been, if not ailing, in a state of depression that had taken her and her mother as far as Delphi, that the famous Castalian spring might be tried, as a cure for lost spirits, and faded cheeks.

Myrto had merely been passing from the state of child-hood to that of a certain maturity. The growing stage is ever accompanied by pain of some sort. Myrto had learned the meaning of suffering. After the first excitement of the great news of her coming marriage had passed, Myrto, left alone with her thoughts, had seen all her life stretch out before her like a dreary waste. Ion did not really care for her, or for marriage, any more than did she. How could he, since he did not even know the colour of her locks? Had he been eager — as was Timoleon — already she would have heard the nuptial hymn.

Ah-h Timoleon! 'twas he that had wrought upon simple Myrto's heart, setting all its tender chords to quick vibration, and to make marriage with Ion seem a closing of all gates opening upon happiness. For Timoleon had come not once, but again and again to the garden wall. Myrto had been given a greater freedom, since her marriage was a fixed fact. She was allowed to walk in the garden, could even sit there, with her needle, and sew, with only the birds for

company. Her guilty meetings with Timoleon, after the betrothal banquet had been set as far away as Gamelion—these clandestine talks had been more and more frequent. Myrto had supposed Timoleon aware of her coming marriage. Finding him still in ignorance of the hateful doom, Myrto, each time Timoleon's garland had been flung across the garden wall, had summoned her courage to tell him she was no longer free. Then the music of those thrilling lovenotes—voiced by Timoleon's ardent utterance, made confession die upon her lip. To hear Timoleon whisper passionate phrases, and to live on the secret ecstasy of those outbursts, melodiously singing in her ears like celestial music—to continue to hear Timoleon speak thus, across the garden wall—Myrto felt she would face death itself.

The guarding of as great a secret had brought its own punishment. Myrto, living in constant dread of discovery, and her love for Timoleon having grown to a mounting madness, the child's health had suffered. The going to Delphi had been almost a boon. At least once away from Athens, she would not be torn by a hundred fears, dreads, and the ever-pursuing thought that each day that dawned brought her marriage nearer — this her hateful doom might be forgotten.

Delphi's sacred spring, and still more the great splendour of Delphi itself, had given a fresh zest to life, and had consequently brought back the roses to Myrto's cheeks.

But once the Dipylon Gate in sight, and Myrto drooped, as though struck by some sudden blight.

Hermione had noted the change with a sinking heart. She had so counted on the familiar spectacle of this coming up to Athens to work the perfect cure! And here was Myrto showing the old dreaded pallor beneath her veil, and no more interest in this home-coming than if she had been going to slaves' quarters!

"See — dear Myrto — there goes a newly made bride — that party over yonder — in the bright cart!" cried Hermione, trying to awaken some show of interest in the girl.

Myrto surveyed the hill-folk wedding party with dejected air.

"Is not that ass coming towards them laden with parsley? 'Tis a bad sign, 'tis said;" and Myrto gathered her veil the closer about her.

"I know not — I care not! — you are impossible to please!" the mother burst forth, in sudden, passionate anger. "Any other girl who was going up to Athens as the bride of as distinguished an Olympian — to say nothing of the place Ion has won in the political world — would be mad with delight. Instead, one would think you were on your way to a funeral — to hear dirges instead of marriage songs!"

As the town chariot rolled through Athens' crooked, streets, Hermione's wrathful impatience grew and was intensified. The hopes of months were blown to the winds. Hermione having now become reconciled to this marriage, had indeed counted upon the excitement as upon the vibrating influences of the new life that lay before Myrto, to win back the child's lost health, and her lovely rapturous quality, that had been like a bird's perpetual song in the house.

It was she, therefore, who incited Critias to hasten the wedding. "Yes marry her — I say! and the quicker the better!"

"You — you think then — that the child is in fitting condition for marriage?" To his wife's amazement Critias presented confused looks and blinking eyes. Hermione could scarce believe her ears. Critias — to consider a woman — and that woman — his own child!

Critias appeared, indeed, quite guiltily sensible of his error. His throb of paternal weakness had surprised no one — not even his wife — more than it had himself. Myrto's pallor and the pathos of her young bent shoulders were to blame. Confound women! their stupid ways were always making the wisest of men listen to soft promptings. Hermione was in the right — let marriage be given, as a corrective, to all this nonsense. The fondest of fathers could not conceive of a better restorative to health than the closed doors of the thalamos. To slough off responsibility, on another man's shoulders, was to Critias the best possible method of relieving the tension of the rarely-touched chord of parental anxiety.

The plans for the marriage were soon speedily outlined. "Have everything on the grandest possible scale," Critias cried. "Let the betrothal banquet make Athens ring. I'll hire some famous singers — we'll have the best dancers Corinth has trained — for our male guests, after the ladies have retired."

Critias felt a mounting glow of pleasure, as he gave his commands. Few things gave him such joy as the ordering of costly banquets. This first marriage in the family, and of his only daughter, to Ion — now the most popular young man in the city — one whom the noblest might be proud to have as a son-in-law — this was the greatest festival opportunity of Critias' life. He would empty the markets, he would send direct to Eubœa — to their estates — for eggs of the pea-fowl, for boars' livers; — for fruits he would send to Italy — the wines in his cellars could furnish a dozen wedding feasts.

Hermione listened — and this time with a smile. She, also, took pride in having the wedding festivities as magnificent as they could be made. Diligently she noted on her tablets, her husband's elaborate suggestions. Before she closed the list, she lifted her head — a quick thought — an inspiration had come to her. It seemed easy now to ask

anything of Critias. For the first time in years they were wholly of one mind.

Hermione's longing to ask this hoped-for boon of Critias was prompted by the common feminine instinct to relive, in a daughter's marriage, her own short-lived, connubial emotional excitement. The flicker of those early nuptial raptures flared, in brief shining, across Hermione's now pallid matrimonial sky. She longed, therefore, the more to prolong the sensational moment. The intensity of her desire lent her courage. For that which she was about to ask was a daring innovation.

"Suppose, dear husband, we offer our guests a rarity indeed — suppose — before the banquet — you let the dancer come in, to us — in to us women? We women are so rarely entertained."

Hermione's pleading eyes and her soft blush made her husband look at her with surprised eyes. This novel excitement fired Hermione's beauty to a youthful glow. Or was it some weeks in the country that had made the roses bloom anew on cheeks that were full and firm — full and rounded as Alcamenes' famous Aphrodite — as hers of the gardens!

With his tired eyes on Hermione's radiant skin, Critias cried, to his wife's joyed amazement—"Capital! Capital! The notion is a good one. It will set the women's tongues to wagging. And," he added, for Hermione's beautiful eyes had deepened in colour—and he suddenly remembered how Phidias had admired their colour, "By the white feet of the Graces! but you shall have the andron. In your woman's court, a professional worthy the name, could scarce trip her steps."

It brought no surprise to Critias' self-complacent sense of large generosity to have Hermione spring upward, that she might fling her glad arms about his neck. No expression of 284

gratitude from a wife could be considered excessive rendered to as fond and indulgent a husband and father!

A few days later Critias brought Ion to his house. For the first time the young man made one of the family circle. He was thus informally made acquainted with his future bride's household.

Myrto, of course, was not present. Neither could Nausicaä manage to make her appearance. Her husband brought several excuses. Hermione could have her choice, among so many, of the true one. The agreeable flutter Hermione herself was experiencing left no room for her usual bitterness of distrust — where Nausicaä was concerned. She was in a transport of joy, of delight, a transport dashed with a certain agreeable awe of her impressive son-in-law.

Ion had changed. A new dignity, an air of composure made his strength and beauty doubly effective. His greetings to Hermione — to Thrasybulous — his deference towards Critias were in perfect taste. They were also as cold as the snows on Mount Olympus. He talked well and easily of all things — of nothing. He did not forget there was a stately, nobly-born mother-in-law to please.

"Your sitting-room has a delightful exposure," Ion remarked, as he leant, with perfect grace, on the couch to the right of Hermione's thrones, "and the tinting of the columns is agreeable to the eyes." Ion's cool gaze swept columns, the palms, the birds in their cages, and then returned to make the tour of the pastas—of its hangings, and of Critias's collection of Egyptian deities.

"Yes—when Critias first proposed to follow Alcibiades' example, and paint the courts, I confess I was angry. It seemed a waste of drachmæ. Now, neither Myrto nor I could endure our town life without these pleasant colours about us." Hermione had purposely mentioned Myrto.

She kept her gaze steadily fixed on Ion's handsome face, as he bent forward.

Ion was in the act of leaning over his couch. He transferred a particularly spicy morsel—a bit of sheep's head seasoned with caraway seeds—to his lips, without hurry. He finished the delicacy before he made answer.

"Then — it becomes me — I see — to fill my town house with painters — and at once. Your daughter must not miss accustomed luxuries," and Ion drank his wine, with unmoved composure. After setting down the golden goblet, he changed the subject, almost immediately; he led the talk on to the universal topic — to the war news. He and Thrasybulous were soon deep in the intricacies of the newest fashions in armour.

Hermione, at Ion's calm answer, had all but bounded from her chair. "You daughter!" Not even to call Myrto by name — now that the right was his! He might thus have spoken of the unknown dead — his tone could not have been more indifferent. And this coldness and distance from a merchant's son — one whom it was an immense condescension to receive into the family!

Hermione felt her hurt pride, her wounded vanity pricking her to uncontrollable anger. Olympian victor though he was; and handsome — clever master of himself as he was proving himself, Hermione vowed, as her wrath warmed her quick thought, she would yet teach this cool son-in-law a lesson in humility. He should be brought to a realizing sense of the honour conferred upon him. He should go to the altar with quaking knees and a bounding heart.

All mothers worthy the name, believe in the conquering power of a marriageable daughter. Hermione was a true believer. She felt Ion had only to see Myrto, to speak with her, though it were but once, and he would, he must fall at her feet, as he might below the knees of a divinity. Hermione matured a quick, bold plan. Its daring made her tremble—yet she would dare. There was really only Critias' displeasure to dread. And in these pleasant days, Critias was almost a lover again. Hermione felt she could do with him as she pleased. No one else would know. Even Asia was gone to the Piræus—to see to the bringing to town of the costly Coan bridal robes. The coast therefore was cleared for action. Thank the blessed gods of Hymen, prying hateful Nausicaä had been kept at home—or abroad—it mattered not—nothing mattered now, since Hermione was as agreeably hatching out her plot as a proud hen warms the stir of life in an egg.

The war-talk was in full heat, as the meal came to a close. The libations were duly poured. Thrasybulous pled an immediate engagement at the Lyceum, to see a young foreigner box. Critias sauntered towards the court—he wished a last word with his son. The chance for Hermione to act had come.

Hermione swept quickly to Ion's side. She ventured to lay her hand upon his arm. The gesture was full of timid grace — of womanly dignity. There was pride as well as the sweetness of giving in the noble face.

"Ion — my son that is to be — I see you are to be trusted. Myrto — in less than a turn of the glass will be yonder — in the garden. Let none see you — I will keep guard."

Ion's reserve fell from him. With a start of surprise his strong palm fell upon Hermione's. The two hands clasped — impulsively — irresistibly. What a noble lady it was — this Hermione! What a strange — an unaccountable permission was this — to have even brief speech with Myrto, before marriage. Yet the action — the impulse was surely flattering. Ion rose to the height of the moment, and the more easily because the prospect of meeting his prospective

bride either before or after marriage had no power whatever
— he felt bitterly — to stir a heart-throb.

Yet Ion's eyes met the anxious, questioning mother-look with manly courage. "Dear lady—you honour me, indeed. Believe me—I appreciate such distinction. I shall pray to Hymen to bless our union. I shall try to love her—your Myrto shall not be made unhappy."

The simple strength of Ion's words, their candid avowal, free from all dissembling, won Hermione's moved heart. She leant towards the young man. In broken, disjointed sentences she poured forth her fond tears, hopes, and the weight of her anguish.

"O—be gentle—be kind! Your looks win one to trust you. Myrto is indeed a lovely maiden—no man can fail to love her—once she is known. Only—make excuses—be soft. She is not herself" (Hermione dared not avow the truth—men, all men, put such exaggerated emphasis on a woman's health), "she has not been since—since—she—"

Hermione stopped short. She drew away with a sense of guilt from Ion. She had heard her husband's step along the arcade.

Ion swept her a re-assuring glance. "I shall be here—at the appointed time. You may imagine my eagerness," Ion managed to send a glow to his eyes.

Still he could not warm his voice. But Hermione smiled, with tender sweetness. If she missed the true heat of longing in his words, she showed it not.

Critias linked his arm in Ion's; together they passed into the andronitis, for an uninterrupted talk.

Later on, in the pastas, Hermione was making full confession. Critias, who believed his guest gone, heard with

amazement that he was without, was actually in the garden — and — but the rest was too overwhelming to be believed.

Critias stood over his wife. He raised hands that were shaking with anger. His eyes were terrible to face. He was taking the matter far more seriously than Hermione had conceived possible.

"And you tell me this — with calm lips — that the two are actually together — in broad daylight — and talking?"

Hermione dared clasp her husband's agitated hands in hers. She soothed him — her words came easily. To her delight she saw a softening look come into his eyes — at her touch.

"Surely dear husband, 'tis better they should meet in daytime than at night."

She sent a meaning, laughing eye upwards. Both laughed. Peace thus made, Hermione went on with her persuasive arguments.

Surely Myrto's condition warranted any experiment. Her whole future, as well as her present state of depression, might be influenced, and mightily, by as extraordinary a measure. She, Hermione and Critias had had just such a wonderful adventure — Hermione reminded her husband — with a blush as virginal on her matronly cheeks as the one he had surprised on her lovely young face two days before marriage — years before. Did he not remember how they had been allowed to meet, in the garden — and to talk, for half a shade? And — surely it had had no evil results — this innovation. Her dear mother had been wise when she courageously reverted to better — to more primitive — to almost Homeric ways.

Critias nodded, as he blinked his eyes. He was experiencing some difficulty in placing the incident. He had met so many—in gardens—since that far away time. And he had kissed so many!

Solely from habit, doubtless, he bent now, to kiss his wife. Yet she was as pretty as any in that long procession of women — and as young, he vowed. Her sojourn in the country had certainly improved her looks.

As for this matter of the young people's meeting, before marriage, that, after all, was well enough, Critias conceded, in his present mollified mood. Whatever they—two heads of the proudest Athenian families approved—and whatever Hermione's mother had done—was surely wise. Such a fashion might be wisely revived indeed—better marriages might come about, were young people to know each other, before marriage.

"But not Spartan ways—O dear no!—not Spartan liberties!" Critias cried out, in virtuous horror, his hands uplifted, repelling the dreadful image of Spartan marital indecencies. "And mind, you are not to let Asia scent this novelty—I've no mind to have Athens ringing with it."

When Ion came in from the garden, flushed, with a new glow in his face, Hermione swept her husband a triumphant look. How the plan had worked! Here was Ion with a bridegroom's flush on his face.

With true delicacy Ion made no reference to his walk in the garden, save to say, with infinite tact:—

"Hermione was good enough to let me see your peach trees in blossom. I have plucked a branch—as you see." With dancing eyes he showed a thickly grouped branch of pink buds. "I shall carry it home with me—to remind me of the bloom I found—and the promise of youth I carry with me."

Nothing Ion had said had so delighted Hermione. His manners were perfect — as perfect as had been her ruse for firing love's flame. She could have clasped him to her heart, then and there.

But Ion was being borne rapidly away by Critias. The

latter was proving his joy in the success of his wife's venturesome plan, by pouring out a flood of words.

Before the andron door closed, shutting the two out, Hermione caught Ion's words.

"Yes — yes — I promise to speak to Manes. He is certain to know of some new dancer. Yes — yes — I am entirely of your mind. Let the banquet be set for a week from to-morrow."

Myrto also had heard. She had drifted to the pastas. She held her dog in her arms. She stood for a moment quite still, as though to digest the true meaning of the sentence.

Hermione had now her arms about her darling. Half-laughing, half-sobbing, the two clasped each other. With a sharp protesting bark, Myrto's Maltese pet escaped death only by a quick bounding to earth.

"My darling — darling love — is all well?" asked Hermione, holding Myrto's face between her hands, to scan, with strained eyes, the lovely features.

Myrto's cheek wore the first roses of the season. Surely 'twas maiden modesty made the eyes droop — the heavy lashes sweep the rose bloom —

"You are right, dear mother. He is kind and tender—he will let me have my dog—"

And Myrto stooped to recapture her pet.

Surely her voice had a new note — the old gay tremor was in the sweet tones, as she asked, shyly, "And the betrothal — mother — did we hear aright — Is it indeed to be so soon?"

Hermione pressed her darling close, as she choked a fresh sob.

"Yes — In a week — beloved — a short week! And how are we ever to accomplish all there is to be done?"

### Chapter XXVI

#### THE DANCER

A WEEK later the dancer had swung into the middle of the court with a step so light she stood before her audience, ere they were fully conscious of her presence.

The ladies, seated within the arcades, stared, emitted a few amazed ejaculations, and then the hum and buzz of women's voices filled the peristyle.

All were now unveiled; all were in full splendour of festival array. Golden fillets, studded with pearls adorned dyed locks, whose owners had painted their faces to match the youth of their tresses. Sunken cheeks, wrinkled eyes and hands ribboned with blue veins, gave to all eyes the hidden secret of age. Some were fat, others lean; few sat or reclined with grace or dignity. The seal of their narrow, contracted lives was stamped upon all. These were indeed the faces of imprisoned women.

The dancer's verdict might almost have been read, by clever insight, in her expressive face. This assemblage of women — the ladies so jealously guarded in the prison of the gynæconitis! — what a mean cradle for a great race! Yet these meaningless faces before her, these contracted-browed, these childish-lipped women were the mothers of those mighty Athenians whose prowess and intellectual achievements made them the first power in the world!

Restless, eager, excited, the audience was not yet subdued to attentive calm. These Athenian ladies were noisy, rebellious; the buzz of their chatter and gossip must be stilled before she could begin her performance. The luminous eyes, for a single instant, caught Hermione's gaze. And the two women, as each looked into the other's deep orbs, experienced the shock of communicated emotion. Hermione visibly paled, she felt her heart wildly flutter. Her hands clutched at the inlaid lion's head of her thronos, as her startled cry burst from her.

"Why —'tis she — surely — 'tis!"—

"Whom? Ah-h — so you have seen her before? And yet you promised us a novelty!" Hermione's nearest neighbor cried, in a hurt tone, as though her hostess had done her an injury in palming off a second-rate article.

Hermione regained, immediately, her stately calm. She resettled herself among her cushions. "Be assured you have not been deceived," she answered, her lips curving with gentle scorn at her guest's unconscious impertinence. "She is as new to me—as to Athens—I merely thought to have discovered a resemblance to—to some one I knew."

Hermione's second glance had re-assured her. Lovely as was the being on whom most eyes were now fixed, she was assuredly not the Corinthian of the Dionysia. That lovely shape was slimmer — of more girlish grace. Beautiful as were the face and figure of this Corinthian, her lines were fuller, the look of experience was more complete, while her hair alone would have proved to Hermione the folly of her wild surmise. The girl she had seen at the Dionysia, a year ago, had tresses the very shade of Myrto's bright gold. These hyacinthine locks were beautiful indeed, but they crowned a stranger.

Quieted, at ease in her mind, Hermione settled herself back into the curve of her deep chair. For the dancer, she saw, was sending her own eyes abroad, as though, true artist that she seemed, to compel her audience to silence ere she began her poses.

A sharpened look of pain, had, indeed, lined the dancer's

face, for an instant's transient passing, as she had caught sight of her hostess's moved face. Then the spasm of feeling was mastered. The Corinthian had given a fresh draping to her chiton. When she lifted her eyes from the folds of her gown, she was mistress of face and of every gesture.

A mighty buzzing filled the court. Even with the dancer standing, waiting, ready to begin her poses, these chattering, gossiping tongues could not lose a chance of uttering the last word. The waiting artist came in for her share of candid airing of private opinion, generously shared with all who were willing to listen.

"Well, for my part, I don't see that she is such a wonder. Her skin is fair, I admit that"—

"Oh-h, that hyacinthine shade of hair will turn any skin white."

"You are right, when I wore that shade, my husband gave me all the embroidered chitons I wanted."

"Oh-h — husbands are always the same — old or young. You please their eyes, and you please them. Men have only two senses — sight and taste. Fill their stomachs and —"

"Do look at those tapestries! Isn't Hermione lucky to have a husband who knows how to spend her money! Such a man as Critias is a gift of the gods to an heiress. As for mine, he pulls the purse strings as tight as though" —

"Yes, yes, I know — you've told me a thousand times of his mean ways. But don't lose sight of those figures yonder. They aren't woven — they are alive! And that mass of golden goblets, shiring in the sun — Ah-h, we'll have a grand feast!"

The lady's eyes and those of her companion sent curious, excited glances beyond the court, into the decorated hall. The deepening gold of the afternoon sunlight smote the thick array of golden ewers and goblets, already placed on the small tables, set before the lounges; on the silver and gold

plate; on the costly coverings, of cushions and klinai, and on the rich tapestries. The long garlands, looped from between grinning masks, that swung high, that a sculptor might have taken as a model for an altar's decoration, were admiringly surveyed.

The pinch-mouthed lady withdrew her gaze. She gave a somewhat vicious twist to her diplois that mercifully covered a vast unlovely expanse of formless flesh. The thought of how long it might be before her own and only daughter might be sitting as bride at a betrothal banquet, made Myrto's luck evoke just critical comment. Her tones were biting, as she went on —

"This Ion, now, everyone is talking of — he's rich enough I admit, to make any mother grieve that he's been caught, even if he be a ship-merchant's son. But really, the way some people run after money — I call it in the worst of taste — grasping — avaricious!"

"O! the rich always run after riches. 'Tis the way of the world to long for increase. Ah-h—look. Keep quiet, can't you? Your ceaseless chatter scrapes the ear. See! the dancer is beginning to take a graceful pose."

"She's been long enough about it - I must say!"

The dancer had, indeed, taken an effective pose. She had lifted her bared arms, her pink palms outermost.

The dancer, with swift grace, now swung her volumious draperies round and round. As the billowy mass circled about her, her face was seen to change. A dawning look of mingled terror and awe transformed its beauty to the rigidity of a tragic mask. To all she showed this stricken face. Then, with incredible swiftness, figure and face were hidden, were shrouded. She had flung her loosely-held himation to veil her completely from view.

The grace of the expressive pantomime, its hint of poetic imaginary, silenced the buzz of talk. A perfect silence en-

sued. Having captured her audience, the dancer proceeded with her poses.

Out from the folds of the veil, unwrapped with purposeful slowness, the face re-appeared. The features were still tight-knit; the inward fear that made the flexible shape now writhe and shrink was moving hands and arms to outstretched length-palms, fluttering outward. Some form of invisible horror must be kept at bay — must be prayed to was being placated.

Presently, the hands were lowered; the face lost its terrorised look, - the muscles relaxed - the mantle fell to the ground. Upon the softened features, a look of dawning expectancy - of mounting delight grew and deepened. The eves were aflame, the whole shape was suffused now with joy — the very draperies trembled, as though sensibly shaken by the flutter of intimate quivering. Hands were once more outstretched, but in joyous out-going, and shape and draperies were now swayed, were now bent, were now sent flying, from court end to court end. The lovely shape might have been a petal blown from a rose; or a leaf whirled across the plain; or a rain of blossoms sent fluttering before the breath of the wind. Now she was floating, borne onwards by a strong breeze; now she rose to it, alert, exhilarant: now an eddy had caught her and she was torn and worsted. her tresses loosened and wild.

The movement was suddenly changed.

Upon bared heels the dancer turned and turned. Like waves whipped by a rising wind, the draperies swirled about the white limbs, describing lovely curves, little hollows and billowy steeps that followed and circled about the revolving form as waves part and follow after dolphins. As a watery nymph might part the waves, immerging, rosy, glistening with Neptune's pearls, the artist swept her body bare, to the waist; she presently lay coiled upon the ground,

in the familiar spiral; she was all woman above and serpent below.

The eyes of the ladies seated about the court had followed every change, every movement of the dancer's pantomime with eager intentness. Each phase in its development had been interpreted with quick, intelligent rendering.

- "Ah! see it is the night, shuddering at the dawn's advent!"
- "Ah those billows are the sea, whipped by the dawn-breeze!"
- "Yes! yes, it is indeed the sea one might imagine dolphins were playing in those hilly undulations!" cried Hermione, with quick delight, clasping her hands with girlish joy.

Myrto leant toward her mother. "How beautifully she personified terror! Oh mother! is she not lovely?" Myrto was beside herself with rapture. She had actually forgotten it was her betrothal banquet!

"Ah-h, now she is personating a sea nymph. How beautiful she is! What shoulders! What an arm!"

The hawk-eyed woman, a cousin of Hermione's, one sitting close to her thronos, and one who did not fear to visit a sculptor's studio, and even boasted of her daring, was also in an ecstacy of delight. She began clapping her hands, like a man, at the theatre, but the ladies silenced her, with angry looks. For all ears were being rocked by a lullaby—

For the dancer was singing, softly, as the Syrens might have sung to Ulysses.

- "She has the voice of a bird!"
- "What her full voice must be if these be but her halftone notes!"

With incomparable skill the dancer as she sang, had coiled her draperies to take the fishy, tail-like finish to the legendary mermaid shape. With a dexterous touch the long tresses had been loosened. The hyacinthine rain fell over and covered the bared shoulders, arms, and the fair bosom. With a playful toss, the enveloping mass was parted, and now the white fingers were busied, plaiting the fallen tresses. As she braided, she sang, on and on, still soft and low, the notes at first of weird unearthly remoteness. Then, as the song rose to fill the court, there was a burst of applause. The notes thrilled to ecstasy the rapt audience.

Song and braiding came to stop. The woman above the serpent now sent forth terror-stricken eyes. A curious gurgling sound, as of one plunging into deep seas, and the coil of draperies submerged the nymph. Out of the coil a new wonder grew.

With magical art, the displaced garments had been swept into lines of grace. The fallen tresses were re-looped; the jeweled clasps sparkled anew on the dazzling shoulderslopes, and a fresh pose was taken. From being fluid as water, the dancer was now turned to stone. Her eyes were sent outwards - high up - as though to a mountain top. The expressive facial play told of wonder, rapture, awe. An invisible miracle in upper heaven produced a mysterious. sensuous delight. Eves were closed: delicate sighs were breathed; and gently, the whole figure was soon swaying in cadenced rhythmical grace, as though blown hither and thither by a celestial breeze. The face of the dancer was now like unto the heart of a rose, the light upon it that of intimate, illuminate seclusion. Presently, she gathered her veil about her. Through its gauze the face bloomed forth like rosy dawn through mist.

One last figure completed the poetic pantomime.

The dancer swiftly circled about the court with widesweeping steps. Erect, with head held high, with regal air, the veil was now a scarf, and so swift were the cadenced steps, Zepher filled it. Ever and anon the head was turned, as though to smile at some shape moving beside. Thus might one of the Graces have stepped, on aërial heights, keeping pace with the sun-god's golden chariot.

A last sweeping rhythmic motion — a swirl of her scarf — and the draperies were gathered close, the shape fluttered, swam, and was gone.

The dancer was come to her rest behind the columns of the lower end of the court.

Loud and long were the plaudits. Flowers rained into the court. The artist must come forth to receive these tributes to her talent. The ladies clapped now as loud as men. Their delight was manifested in exuberant praise, in noisy applause. They called again and again for the artist's appearance. A new distraction alone left the dancer free. Hermione had ordered the slaves to serve the sweets and fruits, as well as the cooling drinks.

This Nausicaä felt to be her great moment. It was out of the question for her to accept a secondary place at this first festival in the family. She had been at Hermione's side to receive the guests; she was now telling the ladies, in her most consequential tone, exactly what they were to think about the dancer's qualities as an artist, and how experienced critical judgment should gauge her attractions as a woman. The ladies listened as ladies are wont to listen to one of their own sex whose daily actions outrage the feminine rule of decorum.

"Ump! you think she is pretty but not beautiful? And that her pantomime is poetic but is lacking in originality?" the nearest neighbor began, with fierce combativeness. "Well — let me tell you, you Ionian ladies have standards of taste we Athenians regard as contemptible. For this Corinthian has the lines of a goddess!"

"Has she not?" cried Hermione, coming to her guest's

side. Hermione's softened, happy look, the genuine delight that thrilled her tones, silenced her guest, but not Nausicaä. She gave an angry twist to her resplendent robe—about whose magnificence not half enough had been said by these envious Athenian cats!—and was about to open a real war of words, when Hermione's eyes flamed. She lifted a silencing finger.

"Oh-h—see! She is about to play to us now!" And Hermione sank into her chair, with a radiant look of anticipatory pleasure.

The ladies once more re-seated, the dancer stilled their voices by a shrill note on her flute. Above her piercing notes she heard the chorusing exclamations. She stood at her tallest; she lifted her lovely head and formed her lips obediently to pour her breath into the stops. A poem of pastural life trilled through the reed.

Down light blue hills, came the pattering of slipping sheep. Many and many were there, and the kids were full of glee. One could hear their pleasant bleating, under the tinted beaches, under the dark roofs of the cypress. The whir of bees was, also, heard in sweet clover; and birds gossiped and sang in close branches. There were notes that made the smell of mint in flower come straight from garden beds, and asphodels seemed blowing, light as down, tinting the meadows to pale whites and violets.

Now upon the hill tops, the shepherd was piping to his flock. Through rushes and reeds the flocks moved. The shepherd trilled to the nibbling sheep and then forgot them. He was now wooing his love. A rustic divinity had dawned among the olives. And beneath their sea-green tones, the old, eternal battle was fought anew, of man wooing, conquering, and of maiden's consenting.

As the last, long drawn love note quivered and died upon the perfect stillness, the player heard but one voice above the delighted applause. Hermione had broken forth into ejaculatory plaudits. She had awakened from the trance into which the exquisite playing had plunged her. She had almost forgotton her coming anguish and sorrow in the fierce tumult of emotion aroused by the music. All thoughts of losing Myrto had been quieted, almost submerged, indeed, by the waves of delight the artist's playing had produced. Hermione had been in Eubœa; she had wandered about on her great hillslopes; — had heard the quiet sheep moving to the sweet river bank; and below her own great plane trees she had found peace.

As she piped the shepherd's lyrical romance, the dancer's eyes, above the rude flute, roved wide. She had scarcely appeared, as yet, to have noticed her audience. Even Hermione had marvelled at the power of absorption, at the concentred energies of this gifted creature.

The ease of executing this simple lay left her eyes and thoughts free. The beautiful sea-grey eyes now swept the hawk-eyed brightness of Hermione's clever but over-independent cousin's countenance; — on Nausicaä's wanton Ionian grace the full orbs rested, with curious questioning glance; but it was on Myrto's young face the player fixed her eyes, with singular intentness. The girl could not move, nor could she lower her eyes; nor could the colour flame, to some sudden emotion, nor could the face be set,— the eyes sent staring outward, as some chord of emotion was played upon — but the dancer had caught, noted, did, indeed, appear to reflect Myrto's quick changes.

Upon her and upon Hermione the large luminous eyes dwelt again and again, with fierce questioning.

At the end of the flute playing, the dancer again took a short rest.

The audience broke up, and quickly laughter and cries filled the court.

Myrto, greatly to her annoyance, found herself immediately surrounded. Hateful, inquisitive voices were asking her questions impossible to answer. How rude were even very great ladies! Because one was cousin to Alicibiades, should a matron think she had a right to ask a bride what she intended to wear the first night of her marriage? And how hard to bear were the chorusing voices, prophesying, mysteriously, of the effects of roses, strewn on a marriage-bed; of the peculiar taste of kisses, before the bride had hardly swallowed her last morsel of quince — and of how tormenting was the sound of the bridesmaid's voices, teasingly chanting the epithalamium, at dawn, when one's eyes and limbs ached with sleep!

Myrto turned away; she hid her face from the circle of the laughing, boisterous matrons. How wanting in taste were their allusions, how revolting, to a sensitive nature, their coarse jesting! The sight of a defenseless maiden seemed to whet the edge of these rude appetites for revelling in sensuous suggestion.

Myrto's one longing was for escape. She sent her mother pleading looks. Might she not be released? Did courtesy demand her submitting to further torture?

Hermione came to her darling's rescue. She understood Athenian feminity. Little as she saw of her immediate circle, whenever she appeared, she ruled as a queen among willing subjects. Hermione, therefore, swept the teasing group away. She drew them by the surest of magnets. Those who would follow into the gynæconitis — might look upon the bridal veil, the costly wedding chiton, and other fineries.

Freed from her tormentors, Myrto swept quick, fierce eyes about. Hermione, she saw, had crossed the court, drawing the ladies after her. Even Nausicaä had gone, and also the hawk-eyed cousin. The brilliantly lighted andron was al-

most deserted. The dancer—yonder—could be heard giving her low commands to her assistant. Even she now was alone. For the chorus-master who had brought her, had gone—had been sent, apparently, on some business connected with the coming attraction.

Myrto felt her very knees quaking. Dared she? Yes, and why should she not? There was none to see — none to chide. And even were there, 'twas no great sin, surely, for a girl at her own betrothal to speak to a hired dancer! Being married ought to bring one some enjoyment and freedom — such poor freedom as marriage brought to Athenian matrons would be hers in a short week!

Myrto felt drawn to that bending shape as a needle to a magnet. She would give worlds—her last free hours of maidenhood, her costliest marriage gifts—she felt, for speech with as wondrous a being. Never in all her young life, had she been as moved, save once, as by the dancer's poetic imagery. Timoleon's love notes, in the far distance, had resung their stirring emotion; the sweetness and ecstasy of her love's young dream had recaptured her senses; the player had thrilled her to her very soul depths, with her moving notes of song.

Myrto courageously crossed the court. She would brave all; she felt suddenly upborne by a puissant energy and daring.

Before she had time to be frightened, she had slipped behind the column that almost hid the dancer.

As Myrto's light footfall fell upon the concrete, the dancer had come to a startled, affrighted upright, and the four eyes, as they met, were interlocked. Wonder, the shock of a great surprise, looked out of eyes that seemed to have borrowed each their deep sea-tones, their luminous quality, and their black fringe of silken lashes from the other's orbs. Below the elder woman's eyes a half circle of pale violet was

the rest for the lower lids; the secrets of a more fully developed experience shown forth from eyes and circle.

The artist was in the very act of crowning her locks. Myrto gazed upward in amazement. The wreath had dropped from the artist's hand. Wonder appeared to consume the dancer! She was devouring the maiden before her with eyes in which a hundred emotions seemed struggling for mastery.

As though in sudden pain, the hands were now clasped. She was wringing them; and soft groans broke from her pallid lips. "Oh — Oh-h" she murmured, in pitiful tones.

"Are you in pain? Can I be of any help?" Myrto asked, raising her own lids. She felt she could never be done with looking at this radiant, transformed being — this marvellous artist who, a moment before had seemed lovely indeed, but older, of womanly growth and maturity. The girl who now confronted Myrto's rapt gaze was scarcely older than herself, and her hair — like her own, was bright gold! What a miracle to perform, and all in a moment! —

The dancer had shaken her head at Myrto's questioning. She appeared, if not in pain, to be still strangely moved. Myrto's serious, innocent-eyed gaze, with its look of adoring delight, had stirred some uncontrollable spring of emotion.

Myrto noticed the dancer's fingers were all of a tremble, yet she was smiling in a way to make one feel all her thoughts and feelings must be nobly set.

Myrto crept closer.

She felt herself, in her turn, strangely, unaccountably moved and stirred. Yet there was something so tender, so loving in the looks bent down upon her, from these soulspeaking eyes. Such a moving eloquence in the trembling, speaking — yet mute — mouth that Myrto had the instinct of

a kitten to nestle closer still — to be warmed, to purr for the gift of a sudden caress.

The caress was proffered. But its character was as amazing as was the question that broke, at last, from the dancer's lips.

She had grasped Myrto's wrist with swift impetuous fierceness. She sent her great eyes about, to learn if still they two were alone—could count on the moment's security. Then, as though the matter had long been the subject of previent thought, she bent close to Myrto's ear—she whispered in pained, compelling tones, yet of a thrilling sweetness,

"Tell me, sweet one, Oh tell me! This marriage — this union, with him — with Ion — is not what you desire?"

Myrto's amazement, her shock of surprise were such as to shake her strength. She felt suddenly giddy, but the firm hold on her wrist steadied her. The sweetly agonized eyes, still raining pain as they seemed, also, to be flooded with a yearning passion of feeling, caught the child's terrorized gaze, calmed, soothed, controlled it, even as the artist's warm arm now encircling her, gave Myrto fresh hold upon her senses.

A larger speech than lips could frame was passing between the two. A compelling power, one Myrto had never known, seemed to move her to be wholly herself, to give up the treasured secrets of her timid soul. When she looked into the dancer's deep eyes, and met her probing searching gaze, Myrto felt as though some goddess were before her, with heavenly powers to unseal her lips.

"Oh — be not afraid — dear Myrto — you know me not — you cannot dream of who I am — but indeed, indeed, I am to be trusted. And it is your fate and mine that is now to be decided."

And Maia, with passionate pleading, drew Myrto's slim

shape to her. What powers of persuasion could she summon to make the dear girl speak?

Myrto answered to that last appeal. This then, was, possibly, the woman whom Ion loved, loving whom he had not wished to marry?

Myrto withdrew, ever so slightly. She did not herself wish to marry Ion, nor did she love him. But to be confronted with the woman he loved, and she a dancer! Myrto's reconquered dignity moved her to straighten to a stiffened upright. A dim sense of injury, as of having been trapped into a false position, of being forced to admit things that were outrageous—coming from such a source—this rising tide of indignation was blanching Myrto's lip and cheek.

Maia divined this barrier of wounded pride building between them. She must use new forces to break it down. Yet how find right words when she herself was all undone? The sight of Myrto, of this lovely, timid, innocent darling—the girl she might have been, but for her father's cruelty! the feeling of this nearness, yet remoteness, with as adorable a sister—one all her own—the vague consciousness of the strange intermingling of their fates, and, above all else, the overmastering drawing of the blood-tie, pulling, straining for acknowledged oneness—Maia was all but overcome by the many conflicting emotions.

Trembling, shuddering, torn by her agony of suppressed passion of mingled love and of longing, the wave that had carried Maia to this crisis, broke. A rising sob came to choke all utterance. The great tears fell. Unheeded they dropped, round and glistening, upon her white neck.

For an instant of thrilled wonder Myrto watched them fall. Then, unaccountably moved, and as irresistibly drawn, she drew near to the weeping dancer. "Oh-h—I do not know—but I think I divine why you weep. Listen,

you do not look wicked — you look kind — as you are beautiful. I will trust you. No-o Ion is not beloved by me, but we must, alas! marry. Our fathers wish it, and the gods — the fates demand our union."

The dancer's happy laughter that bubbled now like music from her lips, was as wonderful as had been her tears. For Maia's face had suddenly become radiant. She was holding Myrto's hands in hers, close to her heart, as she cried —

"Oh!—The fates, even the gods, blessed be they, one and all, can be prayed to! Marry Ion you shall not, since you love him not—I will arrange matters."

Then she bent downwards; she breathed low her words: and never had Myrto heard a woman's voice as tender.

"Will you — will you kiss me, dear one? Will you let me feel your cheek?"

Obediently Myrto lifted her lips. The dancer touched them with loving ardour. And as though the impulse were beyond her power to restrain, she clutched the dear form close. Releasing her, she whispered, brokenly, "Oh — do not wonder. All will be one day made clear. And be comforted — also — dear one! For Ion has been true, wholly worthy of your confidence. He — he will not speak, he has not even seen — but surely some calls! We must not thus be seen. There! one more, and remember — you shall not marry unless —"

Manes' tall form now darkened the brightly lit arcade. And Myrto slid away.

The ladies who witnessed Maia's final exhibition of grace and skill, were amazed at her novel presentation of a subject worn to shreds.

This dancer appeared to be able to surpass all others. She gave her audience the favorite Greek rendering of Venus and the Loves. One tiny boy, with fluttering wings, mi-

raculously fitted to his fat pink shoulders, was now perched on one of the dancer's shoulders, as his twin sat upon her knees. Next, both the Loves were harnessed with silken reins, and Venus was driving them. Then other various poses were given, till the last was reached.

The cherubs rolled in, from the inner arcade, a low chariot. Into this the queen of Love stepped. Out of a cloud of draperies her garlanded head rose like that of the Cyprian goddess from the soft foam of the sea. And the Loves ran nimbly, round and round the court, their prancing steps carrying the gilded car to its final rest behind the columns.

Myrto clapped louder than all. She only longed to have the wonderful pantomimist go on and on. For since this her betrothal banquet was not to end in marriage, it was amazing to find how great could be a bride's enjoyment.

# Chapter XXVII

### MAIA'S ARRIVAL

The news of Ion's approaching marriage had met Maia at the Piræan docks. It was Manes and not Ion who had hurried from the crowd collected about the quais, to watch the docking of Maia's gallant ship. It was Manes who had brought the fair structure of Maia's bright hopes to sudden ruin.

Maia had set sail for Athens with the winged feeling of one driving her car of happiness to its goal, at full speed! Free, at last, since Nirias was dead, Maia had flown to receive her victor's crown. Ion's tightening arms, his kiss of approbation, for right sacrifice, for long waiting, would be her conqueror's wreath. In lieu of the victor's crown, Maia was to drink the cup of misery to its very dregs.

The chorus-master, on hearing of Nirias' death, had received from Mago the glad news that "his mistress Maia was to come to Athens, and shortly: would Manes select a proper house, one near the gardens if possible, and with a garden of its own."

The right house having been found, one providentially but recently finished, large, for Athens, and with a fine garden, Manes was all eagerness to see his former pupil installed therein. He had learnt many things since coming to Athens. Among others there was a chapter to be added to the story he had told Maia, long months ago, on his Corinthian terrace.

Manes had, therefore, gone down to the docks, with the eager joy of one who brings glad tidings.

Maia, though she stood under a fringed pavilion, he found in no state to hear drama. She was pale, distraught. The glory of her looks was dimmed. He could scarce fix her eyes or her thoughts; surely Nirias had not really captured Maia's heart! The mere conjecture seemed to exceed the bounds of belief. Yet here was Maia, robed in costly garments, with captains and ships' crews, and with a multitude of slaves crowding her deep ship's hold, looking the very picture of woe! The situation was one beyond Manes' grasping.

Thinking to divert such obvious misery, Manes had quickened speech. The very latest Athenian gossip he spread before her. She lent courteous but unheeding ears. At last, however, a chance word — a stray sentence fixed her wandering eyes.

"Timoleon — the new leader every one is talking of he and young Ion"—at these names Maia had turned. Her cheeks crimsoned only to pale to Parian whiteness.

"Yes, yes, Timoleon and Ion — what of them?" Maia now started to a quick upright. She was clutching Manes' arm; — the nervous pressure of her fingers told him more of her state.

"Well, well?" Maia cried, insistently.

"Ah-h, you know these gentlemen — my dear?" Manes asked, but did not wait for his answer. He would learn all there was to know, by skillful handling of a woman's emotion.

"Well, these two gentlemen are making history, and fast. They are helping Alcibiades to his purpose — for the war fever now consumes all Athens — all the Piræus —"

"Ah-h!" cried Maia, still with fixed, strained eyes; she was suddenly grown rigid and tense. "Go on Manes—the—the war news I find interesting."

"Well you'll hear nothing else talked of, in all Athens.

The city has gone mad. Plays, the theatre, even the spring festivals are barely mentioned. Even my patron has lost interest—barely finds time to assist at a rehearsal." Manes sent Maia's white face a searching side-glance. Could it be that handsome, rich young Ion who had brought Maia to a love sick stage? If so—but Maia was confirming his clever surmise. Her fingers had relaxed their pressure. She had taken on marble hues.

"Your — your patron — and what of him?" Never had Manes imagined Maia's voice could show such trembling. For all the itching of his curiosity, the chorus-master's strong heart stirred within him. He longed to proffer comfort, to show his sympathy, and, instead, awkward blunderer that he was, he must blurt out a truth that struck the dear creature to earth.

"Why — nothing — only Ion — the Piræan victor — you know, I have told you I am in his pay — since his marriage is so soon to come off, finds no time,— but, in Heaven's name, what ails thee, dear Maia?"

Maia, like one bereft of her wits, had started, with wild fluttering motion, to her feet. Her arms shot out of her enveloping draperies. She was tossing them above her head as might a Mænad in Bacchic frenzy. A sharp cry stabbed the air. Hardly had the shriek of anguish rent all ears, when Maia's shape fell, in the limp of a swoon, across Manes' arm.

Love, in truth having entered Maia's soul, had come as conqueror. She was among those few women whom a strong passion consumes—and makes separate. As the earth receives from the sun its light, and life, and beauty, so Ion and love of Ion were to make for Maia the one sole luminary. Her poets had sung of such consecrating passion. She had smiled and doubted. Now her life, her sad days, and sadder nights proved the poet's singing a living truth.

By Nirias's bedside, in her long waiting, she had lived by that high flame of love. Every act, every thought and deed, had been fed by the torch of that illuminating inspiration.

In her care of Nirias, during his illness, she had, she felt but fully repaid her debt. Ion, surely Ion would love her the more for this her sacrifiec! With passion at the helm of her high spirit, still Maia's better, nobler past would not let loose its hold. Till weak and dying Nirias was dead, she said, again and again to her hot impatience, Love and Ion must wait. Once freed — and then, Ah then! What singing together, in the crowdéd choir! How love triumphant would be pressed from their full souls, even as wine bursts from the trodden grape — yielding its full intoxicant!

And now! -

After the first agony of suffering had passed, the heroic element in Maia's soul helped her to creep back to life. Ion married, was, she well knew, Ion lost. Maia had sounded the nature of the dear man she loved. He was not yet wholly Athenian; the root of loyalty was there, deeply imbedded. If he married, he would, at least, for a time be true. And during that time, she, Maia, would be following, day by day, the funeral of her own youth, of her great beauty. The Maia Ion had loved would be buried long before Ion, as a middle-aged man, would presumably resume the customary life of highly placed Athenians.

Must she, therefore, as long as life lasted, sit down with sorrow?

The vigorous Athenian air brought one answer. The tremendous Athenian stir of life and the tumult of this wartime, swirling about her, brought another. In the days to come, the centre, she, Maia, and her "house in the garden" were to become, for all that was most brilliant and soulmoving, in Athens, was to be the third determining factor in restoring new energies of life and mind to one who could not be content, indeed, to sit down with sorrow.

The story Manes had to tell, and which he told at the very beginning of Maia's stay, brought to Maia the first great help in this re-building of her life. Its amazing, farreaching consequences stung her to action. And quick action is grief's deadliest enemy.

The story Manes had to tell was this:

On his arrival in Athens certain things, stray bits of gossip concerning Critias and his household, had aroused his interest, Manes declared. A contract made with Kronos, Timoleon's slave, for sandals, cothurni, and stuffs for the fitting out of his chorus, had resulted in strange happenings.

The secrets of the Critias household, among others, were revealed. The story of their earlier struggles, before Hermione's wealth came to her; of the "exposed child;" the death of the elder children, of all save Thrasybulous, of the plague; of the birth of Myrto and Serapion; of Critias' extravagant ways, once Hermione's fortune was come to him; of his vices and dissipation; of Hermione's long patience, economy and proud bearing; of her hatred of her daughter-in-law — of her long opposition to Ion the Piræan as a son-in-law, and finally, seeing Myrto's sinking to quick decline, of her glad acceptance of the match.

With Asia, also, Manes next had many hours of talk. Haunting the Agora brought a man strange friends and stranger tales.

"These Athenians think to disgrace a man by dubbing him "Agoræious" but many a man's fortunes have been made by knowing when to pace the porticoes"—shrewdly interpolated the Corinthian.

And this was not all he had to say. The most astounding piece of news was still to be told.

It was Asia who had confirmed Manes' belief that the missing child in Hermione's house, was the babe he had found. No movement in Asia's life, she avowed, had been so poignant in tragic consequences as when she had left "her dear mistress's babe, in a basket, alone, among the dead, in the Ceramicus."

Since that day her mistress had never been the same. One longing, one terror possessed Hermione; — the longing to find her lost child among the innumerable Greeks or barbarians coming to Athens, and the terror of discovering in some mained or crippled creature, the victim of her husband's cruelty.

At the familiar phraze, "alone among the dead, in the Ceramicus" Manes confessed his excitement had made him all but betray his great secret. He could not repress a cry of mingled joy and amazement. Although Asia had used all her wiles to make him explain this shout — pleading, coaxing, even bribing him to enlightenment — yet Manes had had the strength to keep silent.

"Knowing you were soon to come, dear Maia, feeling sure Nirias could not live forever, I waited. Now all I know is yours. Surely now you can separate your Ion from Myrto—for you need have no compunctions—she loves him not." And Manes brought his wondrous tale to a climax by telling Maia all Kronos had hinted, of Timoleon's hopes, of his having captured "that innocent child's fancy, for 'tis for him she weeps, and not for Ion—all Athens knows what Asia knows. My master is indeed her true mate, a noble, like herself, and now becoming a power in Athens," Kronos had concluded, with mingled pride and affection.

Maia received this revelation of all that most nearly touched her life, with mingled emotions. This all but certain knowledge of belonging to a great and noble house thrilled her with an overwhelming joy. How many dark and hidden impulses, motives, and aspirations such an ancestry made clear!

Then the dark shadow fell across this glowing consciousness. Ion about to marry Myrto, her own sister, and that sister to be another victim to their common father's greed, to his lust for gold! By all the powers below! but this double crime must be prevented. The gods had put this knowledge in her — Maia's hands — to be the human instrument to work their will. She must go, and at once, with her wondrous tale; she must fling herself upon Hermione's bosom, clasp Myrto to her, and, together, they would confront Critias and force him to repentance, to justice! Imperious, overwhelming, this impulse to punish, to bring Critias to judgment drove Maia to a very fury of enthusiasm. Orestes-like, she felt impelled to turn avenger.

Twice had Maia gone to the house in the Street of Hermes.

And, though she faced the very door, had an invisible hand withheld her!

Again and again, by night and by day, an inward, warning voice had risen up. "Wait! wait!" it whispered, "not yet—strange and wondrous things are yet to happen."

And Maia felt herself compelled to listen to the voice.

The more vehemently Manes urged disclosure, therefore, the more fixed and obstinate had been Maia's refusal.

When Manes pled with her, when he showed the difference the knowledge of her relationship to Myrto might make to Ion—"Ion, surely, once he knew he was to wed Maia's sister, might well hesitate, might find excuses," even to this, the most potent of Manes' arguments, Maia found plausible answer.

"Never fear, Ion will not wed Myrto, of that I am well assured," she would cry, with eyes fixed and set, but with a

soft, radiant smile — the smile of a believer. "No, no, Nemesis, she who also holds the scales of hope, tells me differently."

"And your mother, what of her? Have the fates whispered their will to you concerning her, also?" was Manes' satirical query. He was beginning to feel that this Maia of Athens was no longer the same as the Maia of Corinth. This enigmatic woman was as mysterious as was the winged sphinx, at Delphi.

Maia continued to present, indeed, fresh proofs to her former master, to her one time father, of his complete ignorance of a woman's mind. Her reply to his sarcasm gave him further food for ruminating thought.

"Ah-h, my mother! Believe me, O Manes, Hermione is happier longing for me, than would she be to find me, since I am the woman I am. She remembers the babe she lost. Tis that babe her arms long for. It has never truly grown up. But for a grown woman, such as I — and one with my history! — Now tell me, Manes, what would Hermione and I find to talk about, shut up, day after day, in a spinning-room? Can you picture me at a loom?"

Both smiled, as Maia presented the strange prospect. Manes was forced to concede the strength of this argument. Maia went on —

"Were I to announce our surmises, were we to show our treasured casket, the amulet, and tell all — and they should receive me, what would become of me? In such surroundings, think you, one who has tasted life's freedom — one who has breathed the air men breathe — has travelled far, has sorrowed, and lived, and loved, could such as I — now — cramp my soul to low doors? No! No! Manes, I must indeed live my life as the gods have decreed. I accept my fate." Brave and convincing as were her words, Maia's tone was shadowed with gloom. For she remembered the

curse that lay upon the great house of Alcmæonid. Was this dread destiny to descend upon her? Was this unrelenting weaving of fate's web the secret of her thwarted life? — of the ever-recurring anguish of handling the cup of joy only to have it dashed from her grasp, at the very moment of the glad sipping of life's nectar? How near she had come to clasping hands with joy! How sure the cruel touch that had swept the clasp asunder, to leave her life empty, desolate. Was this — this, indeed, the end? To find noble kindred, to be among those greatest in Athens, and yet not to be able to claim one's place? To love and to know one's self loved, and to have one's own sister step between? What must she — what could she do? For never must the dreadful crime be permitted of Ion's marrying Myrto!

The "Voice" said "Wait!"

As the days drew near, and rumours of the approaching betrothal banquet thickened, Maia felt the mounting of rebellious forces. Every pulse-beat sang aloud its longing for a quick finish. Act she must, and soon — or let the true end come — let her drift onward toward Charon's waiting boat. Yet the choir of ringing, inward voices counselled patience; — louder and louder they sang, until, two days before the banquet they stopped.

Manes, in a mighty flutter, had rushed to Maia's court. He had great news to announce—and more than news. The quick plan he had formed, he felt scarce needed speech. His secret was given to Maia in his eager flame-lit features and in his speaking eyes!

But Maia was overcome with a great trembling. She heard nothing, knew nothing, apparently, save that Manes had said he had talked with Ion. "How did he look? Did he seem pale, worn, did he look happy, elate? Did his words come easily, as one glad of the project? Is the wedding to follow immediately after the banquet? Oh! why can't you

find a tongue? Where are your wits?" was Maia's distracted acceptance of Manes's statement.

Manes had seen women in such straits of passionate impatience before. He calmed Maia's over-wrought state; he bored himself with giving full, tiresome details. Ion looked as usual, he thought; perhaps a little less blooming—

"Ah-h" was his reward. Maia looked rosier, on the instant.

"He spoke as a man might speak of a relative's birthday, he named the day of the wedding, indeed — and of the betrothal, yet there was neither thrill nor throb in his tones."

"Dear Manes, how clever an observer you are! Go on, on, I say. Why are you withholding the date of the marriage?" Maia's eyes had the glitter of steel. Her breath, Manes saw, dried upon her lip, even as it flamed.

"The wedding is to come off in a week — The betrothal —"

But Maia had grasped Manes hands, as though they were Fortune's own. She clung to them, caressed them, leaning forward, as one who could not bear the full weight of golden joy, as she cried,

"Manes, dear Manes, what a friend you've proved yourself! A week, you say, a whole week! Surely, the gods are good! For there will be time! I cannot fail to see him, to speak with him before then. He cannot keep hidden a whole week, he must see to things, must practice—with his cavalry company—yonder—must walk to places, must make at least a last appearance, and before—" It was Manes's voice cut her words short.

"Listen, Maia! I have a plan. The Fates have thrown you a chance — and one in a thousand — for, changing perhaps, all things. Will you take it?" Manes held the fluttering fingers still. He fixed, or rather attempted to fix, Maia's wild, wandering eyes.

"The Fates have thrown you one great chance. Will you take it?" he repeated, insistently.

"Of course. What is it?" Maia was entirely herself once more. She felt equal now to any form of action. Her resolute soul was medicined — was whole. Ion was not to be married for a week. In a week the heavens might fall! Sparta might come, knocking at Athen's doors! The fleet might sail for Sicily! There was no wild, no daring impossibility, Maia did not caress as probable, as certain to come to pass, to stay the drop of Fate's bolt.

The full lips; the hands clasped tight about knees upon which the clever, brilliant face rested, inspired with thrilled thought,—this new, yet old Maia—the Maia Manes had known in their days of old at Corinth, was indeed gloriously herself once more.

The demand for a clever dancer and flute player at the banquet, Manes was telling her, would open the doors of Hermione's house to Maia. Did she but choose — she could thus present herself as the professional he, Manes, had selected. As she was first to appear before women, her real identity would, for a time at least, not be suspected. She would be entirely free to disappear — to fall ill, before the great feast — any excuse would serve.

Maia's soul rose to the plan. She felt the very gods willed it. For the warning voices were stilled. This, obviously, was the divinely appointed moment!

She was, therefore, to be permitted to enter the house of her fathers! She would actually see her mother — might, perhaps, herself all unknown, have speech with Hermione — with dear Myrto. Maia felt a strong sweet yearning stretch out towards her sister. The abyss that lay between their lives was bridged by Maia's tender longing to see the girl she might have been — one like Myrto — her very twin — innocent, ignorant of sorrow and hardship, as of love.

The project suited well with Maia's intense longing, also, to look upon this hidden Athenian life of noble women. The revelation this knowledge would bring might change all things. Herself unknown, she would be the freer to see, to judge, to make the final great decision of all their fates. For more and more Maia felt herself directed. Invisible forces were fluttering about her. Doubtless the dear god of her ancestral house — Apollo himself, was guiding her actions. With such celestial guardianship, she could not go wrong. Whatever was to come of this meeting with her kindred, would be the dear god's will.

It was in this spirit Maia had gone up to the house of her fathers.

## Chapter XXVIII

### MAIA'S LITTLE PLOT

THE dance over, Maia found the impulse to act, and the necessity for immediate action, driving her onward with the relentless force of an imperious fate. One fierce desire consumed her. She must see, she must find Timoleon. No part of the mysterious drama of which Maia felt herself now to be the chief actor, was more amazing, more startling, than that Timoleon, of all those she had come to know in Athens, should prove to be the one instrument best fitted to further the mad, yet, also, entirely sane scheme that was to precipitate the climax of this day of days.

The plan for disentangling the knotted threads of fate, had been disclosed to Maia, in miraculous manner.

Had Apollo's voice, through his preferred priestess—through the Delphian lips—shouted the divine command, Maia could not have felt more assured of the celestial decree. Clear as the aërial paths of light trod by the Immortals on their way to Olympus, had Maia been led along the road to action.

The secret of how to liberate Myrto, Ion, and herself, had been delivered to her, as though shot down from Heaven's blue. Even as she had quivered within her mantle, simulating the Dawn shudder, the scheme had opened, in wondrous unfolding. It had grown to clear and definite shape, as she had played the Syren; it had assumed the calm of easy feasibility, as she had fluted pastoral scenes and rustic loves. Surely, through the lute — his own loved instrument — Apollo, from his shrine, had breathed the miracle.

When she had sung the Apolline Hymn upon her double flute, even as those women before her had visibly trembled, swayed by their inner emotion, so had Maia quivered with the triumphant sense of the coming of this quick deliverance.

Now, thrilling still, now cold, now hot, limp, alert, burning with impatience at the slow measured tread of her carriers — now trembling with dread lest the human instrument she had selected to accomplish this, her plotting, should fail her — Maia, within her litter, was also played upon by a hundred emotions.

Before the curtains were fully drawn she had breathed a command. "Tell the bearers, Mago, to carry me to the street of the Tripods—the lower end. There they are to stop. I walk from thence to the gardens." With swift gesture the curtains were then swung to.

As she sank among her full pillows, Maia buried her burning face in her cold hands. The reaction from the long strain was proven in the ache of pulsing nerves. The dear gods in heaven! but what a scene! What shades to have lived through, and yet to be alive!

Swirling, like eddying currents, now rushing with tumultuous force, now circling about some minor insignificant detail, the overwhelming impressions, thoughts, incidents, as well as the full force of the tragic facts of her late tremendous experience, massed themselves before Maia's mind.

And so that nobly featured matron was her mother! How the dear face had worked — how moved to exquisite tenderness had been the features when emotion stirred them! Ah-h — whence had come the power to withhold the cry that had leapt forth at the sight of those tears, of those dear work-worn hands, interlocked, when she, her lost daughter, had wooed Hermione to think delicate thoughts — to hear Pan's flute among the river rushes!

Then, with a wild swirl, Maia's thoughts rushed to circle

about that other vision. Myrto's pure, believing eyes confronted hers; they spoke to her with a thrilling power, here, beneath the swaying silken roof of her litter, as they had when Myrto had looked her faith, her childish, rapturous joy, within their father's painted court. Ah-h—to that faith, she, Maia, must indeed be true. She and she alone could save them both, she felt, from the dreaded fate of their common misery. Even as the thought of Myrto came, with a start, Maia realized that every moment carried the tragedy onwards, with lightening wings. A smothered cry, wrenched from her sense of hopeless battle against time—against what,—were it not prevented, would be a crime indeed—burst from her.

Then, with the cry came, as sweeps a lightning stroke across dull skies, the full--orbed belief in the coming certainty of success. Still at such a critical time, every chance of failure must be cleverly forestalled.

Maia, therefore, groped blindly for her tablets. Bidding her bearers stop, while she wrote, she scratched the necessary words—tore and folded the leaves, bidding Mago, in strained tones, "Should you fail to find Timoleon at his house, look for him in the Gymnasium—the one close by the gardens—and bring me word who among the officers is practicing, with armour—in the pit." Mago had listened, had saluted as he seized the folded leaves, and was gone.

Having relieved her mind of the dread of missing the man, the one man in all Athens who might be used as the Fates' instrument — Maia once more leaned back among the cushions.

She was amazed to feel a now singular elation succeeding the frenzy of a few moments before. She breathed, as in months she had not breathed, the elastic air of recaptured freedom — of serene conviction. The feeling that before the sun's setting, the deed would be done, touched her whole being into flame. Never had she felt such command of her powers; never had her intellect lent itself to her will as now it did.

Scarcely had Mago left her, when the litter was brought to a stop. The entrance to the famous street was before her.

It was the time and the season when the beautiful Athenian thoroughfare was at its most brilliant shade. Maia saw, at a glance, that all social Athens was gathered there. Young men fresh from cavalry evolutions in the Lyceum, had brought thither their heightened colour; some still wore, with gallant air, their peaked riding hats, and others handled shining goads.

Handsome youths, of half foreign birth, who had passed the afternoon in athletic exercises, in the Kynosarges, outside the gate — the gymnasia specially reserved for metics or the illegitimate — were now freely mingling with the rightly born, without fear of disturbing the city's peace. Such youths showed dark, liquid eyes and warmer skins than the Athenian clearer-toned eyes and complexions. Eastern or Ionian languor revealed itself in the lolling postures of these young men of mixed blood. The glitter of their many jewels, on fingers, in tunic clasps, and on sandal thongs, made one with the dazzle that lined the long winding street, whose curve, beneath the Acropolis' stern eastern end, wound like a glittering cineture of bronze and gilt, between the uprising rock of the citadel, and the city wall.

The glow of the dropping sun harmonized tripods and shrines, statues, and the living forms.

Some hetæræ, whose crosus-coloured draperies caught and seemed to hold the sun's glow, now deepening in the zenith, carried their light grace hither and thither, from youths to the more elderly, like butterflies who light but to flit anew.

Maia sent searching eyes from group to group. The face she longed to see — was alas! not there. Timoleon was either late or was gone elsewhere. At the thought of all that hung upon her finding him, Maia's knees suddenly bent like wax beneath her. Yet her lips wore the smile of victory rather than defeat.

Many were the eyes that met hers, sought to fix them, and failing, pressed forward, to bar her swift steps. Some advanced, indeed, and swept close beside her; to those whom she already knew, she made courteous excuse, her pressing haste being clearly obvious. But her appearance, she soon found, in the Tripods was become the event of the day. She, the most talked-of among beauties—the least seen—the least known, was come, at last, to take up her place as queen of beauty. The press about her, the buzz of admiring comment was thickening to an unbearable degree, when a well-known voice came to her rescue.

"Maia of Corinth! of all wonders for glad eyes!"

"O dear Glaucus"— cried Maia, hurrying towards the young man as she gathered her flimsy draperies together with nervous grasp, "how charming of you to come — and at the very moment I most needed you!" Maia's elastic step carried her free of her over-zealous admiring throng.

"Now I am crowned indeed, sweet Maia!" lisped Glaucus as he threw back his head, with boyish glee. "Tis the first time I've so much as won a recognition at your hands. Pray tell me in what way I can be useful."

Between the bright aisle of glittering bronze, the two now hurried on. Maia's calm had returned to her all her skill for quick decisive action. Did Glaucus know where Timoleon was to be found, she asked? Might he, indeed, be now and at this very moment, near that dearest of all his friends—that mysterious Ion whom all talked of—and whom no one saw?

Maia's deep eyes slanted their glance at Glaucus' fair cheeks. Glaucus, of all men, would be the last to read aught but idle curious questioning in the eyes all Athens found worthy of being talked about.

"You call Ion mysterious?" Glaucus blurted out, his own eyes wide with the marvel of finding the strange things women see in men. "Surely Ion is easy to read. It appears he must marry—to please his father. And he practices, therefore, till the very last moment of freedom—to please himself. This betrothal banquet comes off no later than to-night—worse luck."

"Yes — yes — and so I have heard. But 'tis of Timoleon I'm thinking. If you chance to see him, will you tell him, from me, I await him — and am longing to see him?"

"Lucky Timoleon! Why do the gods pour all the gifts into one man's lap? You women are all alike—you run after a man once he is seated in Fortune's car. Don't frown, sweet Maia! your message shall be delivered and quickly—and that it may bring him the quicker, I'll go, on the instant to the gymnasium—he's quite certain to be found there—applauding Ion's mighty thrusts."

And Glaucus, with his customary courtesy, sent backwards a winning, graceful salute. Maia blessed him — as he sped onwards. Ten chances to one — he would find Timoleon. And to have learned that Ion was still exactly where she had prayed he might be found, was surely direct answer to prayer.

Through the goldening glow, Maia bent her steps downwards, to her home close to the "Gardens." Hymettus bloomed, in deep purple hues, against the burnished sky; in firm noble outlines the mass seemed to loom forth, with tender protecting solemnity. The hour of all her life, Maia felt, with sudden trembling, was before her. The very hills breathed strength!

The slave whose duty it was to usher in visitors, received

Timoleon as he entered Maia's house, with a smile. He soon brought word that his mistress was awaiting Timoleon in the pastas.

In this inner court, where Maia hid her life, Timoleon had not as yet entered. His eyes travelled fast, as he followed her slave. He could not, he felt, take in rapidly, all the details of a court whose perfection made one catch their breath, so great was its contrast to that of the mean Athenian interiors.

The walls he noted, were tinted a pale lilac. Against them the Doric columns rose up like sturdy purple stalls; their capitals bore touches of gold and deep crimson. Eastern tapestries, whose deftly interwoven figures wore draperies that repeated the polychrome tones of the court, hung at the further end of the deep pastas. Upon inlaid couches and chairs, embroideries, glittering with gold and silver threads, formed a rich sombre background out of which the tinted, brilliantly lighted court seemed to bloom, like a delicate flower from a deep-toned vase.

In the midst of the shaded gloom of the pastas, Timoleon saw Maia. She was seated; she held a frame upon her knees. In and out of the frame, her fingers were pricking stitches. The long threads she drew made her rounded arms show off their snowy outlines to distracting perfection.

As Timoleon hastened towards her, Maia did not rise. With a smile she motioned her visitor to a thronos — one close beside her.

"Pray be seated, and excuse my greeting. I have had an exciting day — and many visitors — I was somewhat weary."

"You are becoming the fashion — Maia" — Timoleon bent forward, his eyes beaming admiringly. He took up a silver thread, one that had slipped along Maia's robe. He let its brightness run through his fingers, playing with it.

Maia slanted cautious, watchful eyes. When his fingers had reached the point of her knee, she would pull the thread, as though to wind it.

"Perhaps," was her quiet answer to his flattery. She was fixing eyes now upon her work. "But, although these young men came to see me, they remain, apparently, to listen to Socrates." As Maia named the philosopher, her voice had an accent of pride.

Timoleon dropped the thread. He leant back in the curving incline of his chair. He narrowed his eyes. "And so Socrates has found you out?"

"So it seems. He has, you see — good taste in woman — at least so your Pericles thought." Maia's smile made her face wear a youthful expression, whose malicious amusement seemed that of a child.

Timoleon did not reflect Maia's mirth. Her gay little thrust he had hardly heard. The naming of Socrates brought the brood of doubt to shadow thought.

"Did he happen to mention the war?" Timoleon suddenly asked, with a restless curiosity.

"He talked of little else. He was, indeed, very eloquent." Maia's eyes brightened.

"And convincing — I presume," quickly retorted Timoleon, almost bitterly. "Did his specious arguments convince you, also, of Athens' coming folly?" And he leant forward with an almost savage air.

Maia turned her frame, took time to insert her needle, before she replied gravely — "I am a true disciple, you see, I was already a believer in these his views."

Maia's serious words made Timoleon bound from his chair. "You believe, you believe! What ground for this belief of yours have you? As for Socrates — when a man proclaims he hears voices, and bases on such absurdities serious arguments for stopping an Empire's great enter-

prise, sane men cannot be expected to listen — as to a true oracle. But you, you at least, are an outsider, you have heard the men of Corinth talk. What have they said to make you believe we are embarking on a foolish expedition?"

Timoleon had brought his agitated steps about the pastas to a stop; he stood before Maia as though before a Sybil, from whose inspired lips he was to hear truth.

Maia put her frame aside. What lay before her was the very opportunity to her hand. She pointed to the empty chair. She smiled up willingly, pursuasively, as she motioned Timoleon to his seat.

"Do sit down, dear man," she began, in her soft caressing tones. "I cannot talk, as you would have me, if you are stalking about the room like a wild beast, unchained. Now listen." Maia drew nearer to her now quieted visitor; she put her hands before her, joining the tips of her forefingers, showing a perfectly serious face above them, as she began.

"I will begin by asking you certain questions. When your famous Embassy returned from Egesta, they reported to the Senate that the City was rich; that they had been magnificently entertained; that at each one of the splendid banquets given them, by different distinguished citizens, the plate displayed was very costly—pure gold. Even the ewers were gold." Maia waited, her eyes asking confirmation of a statement that was now common property.

"Yes," Timoleon replied; wonder as to what this now stale news had to do with what he hoped were more important revelations filled his eyes.

"Also," Maia went on, "When they were shown the temples, the temples they found were also full of gold," again she paused.

"Yes, all that is true."

"And therefore, Egesta being rich, could easily afford to

defray at least the first expenses of the war — she could easily give Athens sixty talents."

"Ye-es, all true."

Maia bent over her couch with rigid fixidity. Her coming stroke would spell victory or defeat. She felt herself trembling, from the sense of all that hung on the way Timoleon would take the great news. With a sudden pull at her courage, she went on.

"Listen, then, Timoleon, to that which is also true." She now spoke with rushing impetuosity, in the Corinthian way, when Corinthians were stirred to great earnestness.

"The Egestæn merchants, you know, come yearly to Corinth. Nirias knew several, and well. They brought his house cargoes of corn, wool, fruits and even horses, for the Isthmian games. Nirias sold to them, in return, finely woven woolen stuffs, and other of our merchants veils and chitons for their women, and Corinthian vases. When Nirias was ill, of his last illness, one Egestæn came to us, as a house-guest. He amused Nirias, for he talked much of your war, of the means Egesta was using to induce you, as allies, to come to her help. Well, seeing poor dear Nirias revive under this war talk, he told him one night, a strange tale. He thought dead men safe, and any one might read death in Nirias' eyes.

"This is what he told us.

"When the Athenian envoys arrived, sent by the Senate and the people, the Egestæns were terrorised. How entertain them? How present a respectable state before mighty Athens? How, poor as they were —

Timoleon jumped in his chair. "Poor!" he gasped, and he steadied his almost uncontrollable excitement by grasping at the two lion heads beneath his hands.

"Poor as they were," Maia echoed; her chill beginning to be replaced by a delicious warmth, for Timoleon's state was the very one fitted to her purpose, "Still Athens must be impressed, must be persuaded to the contrary. Banquets and banquets in plenty should be given. The richer citizens would lend each other their plate. To this all agreed. By night it was carried from house to house, so as to make a fine impression. And when their temples and the treasury were opened out for the Envoys to admire, all the plate the City owned was piled up high, to present a splendid appearance. And even then the plate that was supposed to be pure gold, and very costly, was, alas but paltry silver gilt! And as for ready money, there were not a hundred talents in all the Treasury!"

Maia, as she finished her amazing statement, leant back among her pillows. Her strained look passed from her face, yet the excitement of imparting her secret and the deeper anxiety as to how its results would affect her own great project, had temporarily unnerved her. Her agitated breath lifted her chiton. She found her gaze transfixed by Timoleon's changed countenance.

He stood over her with blanched features, with eyes that seemed starting from his head. The words his pallid lips attempted to frame Maia saw, were being formed with violence. The whole man was shaken, was, apparently, experiencing a terrible moment.

The moment was, indeed, a terrible one. In Maia's revelation Timoleon had seen the downfall of his own rising fortunes, of Alcibiades' anger, of the people's rage, of, perhaps, Athens' ruin.

With the dread vision cruelly clear before his eyes, of all this that was to come to pass, Timoleon's passion of disappointment, of despair, was making one last gesture of appeal.

"You are sure of all this? You would be willing to stand by what you say — before all Athens?"

Maia lifted proud, defiant eyes. Her lip curled, as she

made swift, indignant answer. "I am not given to lying — though I, too, am Athenian. But, if you think I have told you all this, for Athens to be a sharer in the news, you are greatly mistaken."

"But, but — by all the gods! they must know, and quickly! I must indeed go, and at once, to Alcibiades — he must consult with the generals, with the senate."

"Neither he nor you will confer with any one. Be sensible—you are really not as clever as I thought—" Maia's eyes were now laden with mysterious meaning. Timoleon suddenly felt, indeed, as he looked into her grave eyes, the bare truth of her words. This girl, this hetæra from Corinth, was teaching him a new strange lesson of humility. No divining rod of his could touch her depth.

"Indeed, I do not understand you," he admitted, his tones big with wonderment.

"So I perceive. I will enlighten you. This revelation is to be a secret — between us. If you spread it abroad, I will deny all knowledge of the facts. So you see it is to your advantage to keep silent about the matter. Your interest," it pleased Maia to see Timoleon start — to note the life coming back into his face — how accurately her insight had read him! "Your interest lies in possessing this knowledge and in not acting upon it."

"You mean, surely you do not mean I am to let Athens rush into a ruinous war — into debt?" cried Timoleon, feeling a virtuous impulse surge upwards.

"This going to war, on the contrary, will be of use to Athens. She needs to be stirred, to have her fighting spirit renewed. In that respect you and your leaders are in the right. And Sicily, if not Egesta, has spoils enough to make the adventure worth while, while your purse and that of Alcibiades will come back replenished — never fear."

Maia laughingly held out her hands towards Timoleon.

She let him press them. His joy and relief at Maia's reassuring words and gestures were great. This wonderful being appeared to hold in these her slim hands the destinies of nations! What a divine creature it was!

Timoleon forgot, in his excitement and enthusiasm the distance at which Maia had always held him. He attempted to draw her to him. His eyes were full of the question his lips dared not frame.

Maia wrenched her hands away. She put them safely behind her. But she did not take pains to move away. That which she intended next to say, would have power to move him — or she was greatly mistaken, far more than any of the lower forms of passion.

"And now, as I have done you a favour, you are to confer one upon me." Her sea-grey eyes met the bronze orbs so close to her lids, with the level gaze of a commanding goddess.

"Ask me of me what you will, dear Maia, nothing is too much."

"You are to buy me a war-trireme, to man it, to equip it, and — and to command it!"

Timoleon's amazed wonder, surprise, and the quick mounting of delight, fairly transfixed him. Maia had counted upon just such an effect.

"You see, therefore," she went on, with glad, smiling lips, "since I make this offering to the State, I also, believe in your war!"

"Maia!" Timoleon was breathing hard and deep. The one hope he had felt that could never be granted him, to go worthily to this war, was now being tendered him and in magnificent fashion. The prospect of his great good luck gave Timoleon a heady sensation. He still felt the agreeable reel of delirium at Maia's next sentence.

"With my gift, however, goes a condition, and one only,"

Maia looked the very image of innocent pleading, as she poured the effulgence of her steady gaze into Timoleon's flame-lit eyes.

"Name it — it is yours!" he gasped, clasping her hands.

"You must help me to prevent Ion's marriage, and now, at once! There is not an instant to lose."

Tmioleon started as though a lance had pierced him. He dropped Maia's hands. His start carried him away from her. Timoleon felt more than his breath taken from him. First of all, evil-eyed suspicion leapt up. Had she known Ion? Did she love him? Where had they met? He had never once heard of Ion's having gone to Corinth—and Maia, by her own confession, had never but once before been to Athens.

Maia appeared to read his mind as she might an open scroll; she was calmly telling him his thoughts.

"I see, you leap at the common conclusion — that I have met Ion, at some time in my past, and have fallen in love of him. Were this true, that alone would be reason enough, surely. But this, for me, were it indeed true, would not be cause enough, for the plan I wish you to help me execute. There is another and far graver reason, one, however, that must, for the present, be kept secret. Now listen, do not gasp or start, until you hear the end. There is nothing so very terrible in what I am about to propose. It can be easily enough accomplished."

She told him her plan.

Ion, she reminded him, was even now practicing in full armour, in the big gymnasium. His trainer was the well-known swordsman, Clearckus. "Now Clearckus, like all trainers, is susceptible, I hear and on good authority, to bribes. The sight of minae disturbs his perception of the true distance between right and wrong."

As Timoleon smiled, Maia paused. She must gather all

her courage together. The saying of what was next to come was indeed difficult.

" Well?"

"You are to bribe Clearckus, you are to bribe him to show Ion some new passes, and in the showing there is to be some heavy work done—the thrusts and passes—must be swift, must be furious." Again Maia paused. Her lips were dry. She could scarcely slip the words.

"And, after?" Timoleon's gaze was now narrowed — a mere glint of bronze showed the line between the lids.

"During the struggle there would be nothing extraordinary were a leg or an arm of Ion's to be broken. Such accidents happen daily. Only—in this case, Ion must have his left leg or arm in a splint within a shade—at the latest!" With eyes that strove to be perfectly steady, Maia glanced at the water-clock that stood in the court. There was still time; Ion would not be leaving his trainer for at least a good hour. The bath and dressing for the banquet would consume the period intervening between his athletics and the banquet.

Timoleon's face, meanwhile, had recorded the passing of many emotions. His wonder, at Maia's startling proposition, had been replaced by a growing excitement. Delight, joy, and the tinge of a malicious satisfaction now coloured his mobile, expressive face. He was, indeed, experiencing an almost completely happy moment. The prospect of striking Ion down, at the proudest moment, but one, of his victorious career; the hope that leapt up, that, with Ion winged, and this dreaded marriage indefinitely postponed, he, Timoleon could steer his boat into the longed-for harbour; the necessity for action, and for that kind of action for which he felt himself peculiarly fitted — for accomplishing a deed in dark ways — as these thrilling thoughts, triumphs, hopes swept his mind, Timoleon felt that at last

Hermes had truly blessed him. None but a god could have sent him a trireme to command and his rival stricken down at one and the same instant!

Timoleon managed to check the fury of his impatience; he summonded a laugh; he threw his head back, in pretended merriment, as though the wild proposition was to be taken rather as comedy than drama.

"By the wingéd Gods! Maia, but you are indeed to be feared. He whom you love has more reasons than one to dread your embrace."

"I never said I loved Ion," Maia gravely answered, "or, indeed, that I even know him. Now tell me, since I see you accept my proposition — in case a limb is skillfully broken, how long will it take to heal? It must heal before summer — but only just before the fleet sails."

"Ha! ha! she has it all planned, and to a nicety! And this lovely face can hide such devil's plotting. This hand, white as Parian marble, can strike as cruelly as Nemesis. What harm has Ion done you, dear one, that you should be so bent upon hurting him?"

Maia let him fondle her limp hand. She felt, indeed, her strength ebbing. She feared now the loss of a single instant. She must be rid of her visitor, must get to rest—give her tortured thoughts time to regain their calm. Clapping her hands, she bade the slave who appeared bring refreshments. But Timoleon excused himself. He must hurry off—"Must try to find Clearckus," he added, laughing—as though thus to pass the whole matter off as a joke.

Maia let him depart. Her mind was entirely at rest. Timoleon, she knew perfectly well, did not intend to treat her plan as a joke. He had reasons enough of his own, as she well knew — for setting the right machinery in motion. Now that the accomplishment of her purpose was in another's hands, all she could do was to wait. With a long

moan of mingled exhaustion and of quivering expectancy, Maia flung herself upon her couch. How many shades must she wait, before the news came of the success of Timoleon's portentous errand?

Before nightfall, Athens rang with a sensational announcement. Ion of the Piræus, the Olympian victor, on the very eve of his betrothal to Critias' daughter, has been severely wounded. While practicing sword-play, his trainer's or his own foot had slipped. Those who stood watching the practice declared it was the trainer's blunder: Timoleon, Ion's greatest friend, was of that opinion. swore it was he himself who had been careless. dashed forward to whirl a wild circling blow - a new trick - and he had lifted his shield, instead of lowering it. Clearckus' sharp sword, searching for the home-thrust, had pricked Ion's thigh. And a soldier who gave an enemy such a chance, had indeed a right to be laid upon his couch. A wound was light punishment for what might, in battle, have cost as awkward a blunderer his life.

The lady guests, it appeared, had already assembled in Hermione's court. After having seen the new dancer perform, she, who later, was to be the chief novelty presented at the banquet, after the bride had withdrawn, these feminine guests had presented a comic scene to Athens' laughter-loving soul. Nausicaä, that clever, if reprehensible daughterin-law, had rehearsed the spectacle, for her slave's benefit, And the slave had carried the comic features to every house in the neighborhood. The ladies' cries of wonder and rage; - the bustle and confusion: - the fears of some at not finding their way home, in the early dark: - the angry reflections of others at the expense of providing new gowns and costly wreaths, and "none to see" --- feminine eves not counting when masculine orbs were expected as mirrors; - and the scene in the street, when all these wrathful guests

and their disgust were become the talk of Athens — every feature of this amusing ending of a somewhat tragic accident was in every one's mouth by night-fall.

Two there were who went to their rest with joy in their hearts. Maia laughed, and wept, and sang and wailed. For Ion was saved. Yet he lay wounded — and by her hand.

Myrto flung herself upon her pillows with a song and a praper upon her lips. The lines of a pæon she had sung at Athena's festival were murmurred, in glad triumph. And once more she prayed to Hestia. "Till the fleet sail, dear goddess, keep Ion away. And then, O then send me Timoleon!"

## Chapter XXIX

#### THE VOICE OF FATE

In the months that followed, Maia wondered, if, after all much had been accomplished by Ion's accident. The marriage had, at best, but been post-poned. Were Ion sufficiently recovered, the wedding would surely take place. Then, to avert as great a crime, full confession must be made. And what effect would the knowledge of her—Maia's—kinship with Myrto have on her own fate? Would her father—would proud Hermione receive her? Would they let her marry Ion?

Such were the harrassing doubts and fears that crowded thick about Maia's inner life, every moment snatched from the more and more exciting events that made each Athenian day, in these early summer months, one continuous drama.

Athens was rushing to this her great war-adventure, as though it were but play. Greek restlessness and the love of fighting chance were finding, at last, after years of peace, their longed-for outlet.

Recitations of Homer, wooing the crowds to tears or exciting them to impassioned longing for an Achillian moment, rose up from every street corner. And no ephebi, fresh from his first garrison duty on the frontier, but carried his short chlamys light as air, as he swept Athenian streets, to enroll himself as recruit in this his first real war.

In Maia's world, everyone she had grown to care for, or loved, in secret, was heart and soul for the great venture.

Critias, who had been in turn traitor to every political

principle of his treacherous oligarchical party, was fixed at last. The State war tax imposed upon him, of a trireme, had finally settled his unsettled mind. He was now dyed in Alicibidian colours. Crates' deep pockets and Ion's military ardour were to make taxation light.

Crates, he, also, had been finally caught in the war toils. Like hundreds of others, now the great enterprise was determined upon, Crates proposed to turn it to trade account. He was sending ships and men to extend his commercial interests.

Glaucus developed an equally keen mercantile sense. His own trireme, he confessed, was to take, besides the required number of hoplites, a large quantity of costly ewers and golden goblets, all of the best Athenian workmanship.

"After we have conquered Sicily and have taken all the spoils we ourselves can carry away, the Sicilians, who are rich, will want to buy luxuries. Why not, therefore, win a double benefit?"

This amazing shrewdness in Glaucus surprised all. So true it is that those who live nearest to us, are the first to be surprised at any unsuspected trait in character.

Ion on his couch, fretting at his captivity, yet knew not an idle moment. As captain of the horse his time was fully taken up in the outfitting of his squadron on a scale of utmost splendour.

Timoleon, who had laughed at Glaucus' suddenly awakened speculative spirit, had promptly copied him. Kronos was driven mad with the orders to run the factory at full speed, that his — or rather Maia's trireme, might be ladened, along with the necessary provisions, with a cargo of gold and silver sandal thongs.

The beauty and perfection of Timoleon's trireme, was indeed the wonder and admiration of all, as this, his newfound wealth had also furnished malicious slander, for both

enemies and friends. Timoleon smiled, gave no explanations, and took his friends who abused him best in the porticoes, "to see the crews train."

Glaucus, Ion, and Ariston gave their praise according to their nature. Glaucus praised the seaman-like qualities of the beautiful ship, criticised the stroke of the Thranitæ, and asked the impertinent question, "Where has gold grown so plentifully, my Timoleon?"

Ariston begged to be taken as one of the commanding officers, and offered himself to equip a part of the company of bowmen. Ion, who had been carried to the Harbour of Zea in a litter, gave Timoleon a hearty embrace. "It is none of my business, nor that of any one's, where you have found the capital to purchase and fit out as perfect a boat. But pray believe in my delight in your commanding as fine a vessel! It is indeed beautiful, in every particular. By the way, I see your own particular shield is the oval shape—"

"Yes," Timoleon quickly replied with obvious relief, as though Ion's generous praises brought a sense of restraint—for even Timoleon, hardened though he was to most nice points of honour, could not preserve a perfect indurability before the victim whose wounds had been the price of his prize-money, "Yes, I like that illeptical form—it seems to me to be the most workable of all." And Timoleon proceeded to prove, by quick demonstration, how a shield that was as tall as a man and one copied after the human shape, was, indeed, the best fitted to offer protection.

Yet in spite of Timoleon's ability to display, proudly, magnificent armour, and a ship as complete as any, his war-like ardour, as the days went on, sensibly diminished.

Maia's amazing revelations kept ringing in his ears. He was actually turning superstitious. For once in his life there was a something within stronger than his will; "the

divine sign" Socrates was forever boasting about, was being upheld before him. He too, to his horror, to his indignant despair, heard the "still small voice." "Don't go! Stay — remain — the expedition will surely result in disaster." Delphi's recent awful oracular warnings also rung in his ears: yet what could a popular favorite, an Alicibidian partisan, one whose eloquence had helped, and mightily, to rouse the people to war — what could one whose shouting had been loudest, do? His only course was to go on, to the end, whatever the awful end might be.

Thus the day dawned that was to be the last before the sailing of the fleet.

Timoleon went early to announce the news to Maia. The fleet was to sail on the morrow, at dawn. All Athens, he heard, was to go to the quais to witness the departure. This might be the one chance for Maia to see Ion, and this he had come to tell her.

Timoleon entered the peristyle with the first breaking of the day. He was pale, distraught. Like Socrates, his eyes rolled. Unlike the great philosopher, he had few, if any words to say. He walked and talked as might one under a spell.

His walking, with Maia beside him, was done in the garden. Here the breaking lights of the day were beautiful to watch. Between the thick tree-branches, Hymettus was wearing its morning veils of mist, and towards the west, the Acropolis was showing its purple and saffron tinting.

Neither Maia nor Timoleon were thinking of the glories of the dawn. Maia was devouring Timoleon's words, for he talked now, of Ion. She heard the news of the departure of the fleet with an almost unmoved face. Ion was to be there — upon the quais! She should see him! She might hope even to have speech with him! The very thought made her faint with joy.

"Timoleon, do this for me," she laid a hand on her friend's shoulder.

Timoleon started, for the spell of thought was again upon him. But his mind was clear as he met Maia's moved face and her troubled, yet glowing eyes.

"Whatever you wish done, 'tis done already, dear Maia, as you well know," he answered, gently. What a dear woman it was, to be thus wrought upon by love! And he sighed, as he inwardly voiced the thought. Could women, indeed, love thus, as Maia loved? He wondered. What was the dear creature saying?

"Tell Ion, from me, I shall be on the quais. Let him look for Socrates, for Euripides — they are — it has long since been agreed they are to be my companions. They go down in my town cart. We shall start long before dawn."

"Your company is always of the noblest — Maia." In Timoleon's best days, the remark would have been uttered satirically. But the year's suffering and experience had wrought a great change. Satire seemed now a poor weapon.

Maia's answer proved the changes that had come to her. "Dear Timoleon, have you not noticed that if one love nobly — if Aphrodite Ourania be our choice, the best alone is good enough? That is what love teaches — I think — to live nobly."

The exultation in Maia's face matched her voice. Timoleon studied Maia and her impassioned look as he might the scroll of a new book. Once more he sighed, as he made answer, "'Tis news to me—I have not met women who love thus. Plutos and Aphrodite appear to be the gods most truly worshiped. You—Ion—you are both fortunate."

Then, after a short pause he added "And I am glad you and Ion are to meet. It will gladden his departure."

He thereupon took her slim hand in his. He lifted both

as he pointed to the now empurpled Roch that shone through the dark branches.

"Dear woman and friend — you are thinking of your lover — don't start! I have known of your love long since — dull indeed should I have been not to guess this mystery of your life! But 'tis not of love I am thinking" — he paused, with his eyes still held aloft.

"And of what are you thinking, Timoleon?"

"'Tis of that!" he thrust their two interlocked hands forward, upward, "I am wondering if ever again I shall stand thus, in an Athenian garden, with a lovely woman beside me. If ever I shall see the dawn break, upon Hymettus and the Citadel! If ever, Oh — Maia! Maia! Why did you tell me your awful prophetic tale? Why did Delphi utter warning? Why did the Hermæ fall? Call me coward, unmanly, untrue, weak as a woman — all you will—but pity me! for I can only cry 'Me Miserable!' to my doubting heart." Timoleon's impassioned confession was ended upon the dimpled feet of the Graces. For their statue stood beside him.

Maia comforted him; she even caressed him; and she trumpetted Athens' might and magnificence into Timoleon's despairing ears. But the tears that he was not ashamed to let fall, were only dried when the next visitor appeared.

Yet, in spite of Timoleon's strange outburst, and the memory of his tremulous fear, Maia walked upon the planes of exquisite light. For every moment of living now drew her nearer to Ion.

# Chapter XXX

#### THE DEPARTURE OF THE FLEET

Down from hills and mountain slopes, far as the eye could see, in the violet blue of the dawn, slow-moving masses, trailing between vineyards and olive orchards, resolved themselves into strings of asses or mule-carts, crowded with peasants. All heads were turned in one direction.

The port and quais of Piræus were the goal for the country folk.

As the trails neared the plain, the resonant Attic voices chorussed laughter, jests, and greetings. White goat's skin coats, peaked caps, embroidered chitons, coarse but brilliant of hue, began to spot, with ever-moving flashes of colour, ripened grain fields and grey-green olive groves.

Above the gay robes, the women's faces wore sad or sober looks. It was the husbands, fathers, and lads who shouted coarse jests, or sent up the wild catch of a war-pæon, startling timid sheep to affrighted gamboling.

The women, for the most part, sat stiffened in grief. Here and there, along the trail, a wrinkled crone wiped, furtively, the slow-dropping tear. Young wives let the bright rain fall unheeding. Scarce one among these sorrowing shapes, but counted husband, son, brother, or father among the ships' crews or bow-men. Promised spoils and money had lost, on this eve of departure, their intoxicating effect. The awful realities of prolonged absence, of possible slavery, or death, loomed large through the dawn.

"Come! dry thy foolish tears," cried a ruddy-beaked peasant to his wife. Both were sitting, sideways on a stout ass

whose vigorous strides made the four human legs swing from side to side. "The lad will come home rich as a Persian. You'll be wearing naught but Coan robes, in six month's time." The man laughed at the comical thought. He tightened his arm about the broad shape whose face told of long years in the vineyards.

The lines in the woman's face deepened. "Aye," she answered, in a tone of bitter sadness, "so the men say, but the gods for the most part are silent — others send warning. Since the Hermæ fell — we are under a curse, I tell you."

"Hum — that's like a woman. Seeing curses and bad omens in the fall of a leaf or a statue! Lucky we men are stouter of heart, with courage enough for two, or there would be precious little gain or glory in this world! There! don't fidget, or the sack will fall!" cried the farmer, who intended to do a bit of lucrative barter and sale at Piræan markets, after seeing a son off for the wars.

The woman re-adjusted the sack, with fierce grasp. Even as she bent to her task, she summed up the women's fate. "Oh-h I know well what is thought of us women-folk. We are to work and go on working, making men or cheeses according as the gods will. And in the theatres, we are dished up for all to laugh at. But, little as men, or poets either, for that matter, think of us, we read the signs the gods send clearer than most. Who sits on the tripod, at Delphi, I should like to know, if it be not a woman? Who"—but even as the woman warmed to her theme, her dolorous tone broke. Straining forward she cried: "Surely, yonder, see! 'tis the shining of golden helmets! Ah, the brave lads, what a fine show they make, up and so early, and so light of step!"

A company of trim hoplites were stepping briskly towards the gate opening on the Plain, that led into the long walls.

The peasant's eyes flamed with pride at the gay spectacle.

"Aye, 'tis a fine sight!" he cried out lustily. "They and all Athens, even the richest, like us plain hill-folk, have closed no eyes this night." The man's tone had the relish of one who feels that his own state of strained feeling lifts him to the plane of the highest.

Few, indeed, there were who had sought their couch on this eventful night.

In the Critias mansion, the sole slumberer had been the warrior. Critias, Hermione declared, must be fresh for the start at dawn. She and the slaves had been busied, during the night, with all the last preparations. When the time came for Critias to don his armour, Hermione feverishly insisted she, and she alone, should be his helper. "No! No!" she cried, wildly waiving the slaves to the courts, "I and I alone must lace your corselet, dear Critias. Alas! 'tis all too little now I may do to make you feel my loss." And the tears fell, as she bent over to place the leathern armour that it might come rightly to meet its fastenings.

As she deftly fingered straps and buckles, abjurations, pleadings, loving thoughts, crowded to her trembling lip.

"Darling Critias, you must remember, that, soldier and commander though you are, yet you are not Ion's age. Even in Corcyra the winds on the sea, at dawn, are cold, at times. Promise to wear your chlamys."

"Yes, yes, never fear, sweet Hermione, I shall keep your warning in mind. Thrasybulous and Ion will be near, they will look after my health."

Hermione smiled. In the height of her fever of anxiety, the thought of her athletic son's taking precautionary measures, for any one's health, aroused comical thoughts. She kissed Critias, even as she smiled. To find aught but tragedy at this time of sorrowful parting seemed sacrilege.

Critias returned the kiss, though he was in the act of raising the mirror to see how his helmet sat.

He stood at his tallest. He felt the pleasant fall of the leather straps along his thighs. "Ah-h," he cried, with brightening eye, his ears catching an agreeable sound, "I hear Socius and the slaves—they are leading the charger forth. Come, dear one, Ion will soon be here. Call Serapion, and Myrto, and the slaves. We must not miss our prayers."

Critias exchanged his helmet for a wreath. After purifying himself, with lustral water, he proceeded to the altar.

With Hermione, Serapion, and Myrto beside him, and the assembled household immediately behind, Critias gave the signal for the devotional moment. All arms and hands were uplifted. Critias's voice filled the court. He prayed as none had ever heard him pray before. He invoked the protection of Zeus Herkios on those he left behind—he invoked the help and aid of each one of the household gods on him "who went forth to fight for the gods and for their temples."

When his voice rose, in passionate entreaty, to implore Mighty Zeus to send him "home, back again to his beloved wife and children, well, sound of mind and limb," his voice broke upon his lip. The terrors of war took shapes of horror never before fully defined. The possibility of returning, bereft of any one of his loved and carefully preserved parts, loomed up as the most appalling disaster that could befall Athens.

The loud sobbing of his household, the slaves' cries sounding loudest of all, confirmed Critias in this his inward conviction. Who of all those going forth to Sicily, were as wept over as he? Even his slaves were rocked with grief.

The slaves, ever delighting in emotional excitement, were indeed weeping in chorus. Asia led the tearful dirge. Though she had no love for her master, her sensuous African nature rose in rapture to this moment of drama.

Hermione's highly-strung state made her grief dry-eyed. This anguish of parting brought a pain too acute for easy relief. A new dread had sprung upon her.

The awful conviction that never again should she hear Critias's voice in prayer, never should she see his form facing the household gods—this inward horror had risen up to dim Critias's actual shape. Above the altar, as though hovering in visible form, Hermione had all but heard the dread rustling of the Furies' robes.

She turned her terrorized eyes toward Myrto. The child's quiet sobbing proved the lower divinities had, at least, spared her darling.

Yet Myrto had, also, seen a vision of agonizing disturbance. As her father's prayer had risen up, as he had prayed passionately for safety, a dreadful series of possible disasters had trooped before Myrto. Suppose her father, or Thrasybulous were hurt, or were captured, sold into slavery? Myrto's young heart was tortured at the bare thought of such calamity. War came near indeed, now, when one saw a father, a brother in bright armour, going to face a fate many an ancestor had met.

Of Ion, Myrto barely thought. If he came back, unharmed, and her father were alive, she would, she presumed, be forced to marry him. But before that far-distant time there were long months wherein hope could be caressed.

At the thought of Timoleon, Myrto's very heart stood still. Prayer burst from her with passionate intensity. Suppose dear Timoleon were never to come back? At that dread possibility Myrto fell into a spasm of weeping. Her whole life stretched out, dull and commonplace, before her. The sole happiness she had counted upon, in case of sacrificial marriage, was to show Timoleon how good a wife she could be, how superior to Nausicaä, although she was to be wed to a merchant's son, and sold to please her father.

With her tears still pearling downward, Myrto turned, quickly, excitedly.

Who could it be who was entering the peristyle?

The tall figure that pressed forward, and then stood, as though awaiting permission to enter the court, fixed every eve.

Myrto, to her amazed surprise, found herself strangely thrilled. Delight and admiration kept her tranced in the joy of mere looking. For Ion, in the full glory of his martial splendour, was as beautiful as a god.

Myrto had never imagined gold, and silver, and bronze, and a shining helmet could make a god of a Piræan.

Critias' greeting was one of martial lustiness. He was glad of this chance of putting away unpleasant suggestion. This handsome Ion, resplendent as Mars himself in shining helmet, trailing horse-hair crest, gleaming cuirass, and polished shield was the very image of this war he, thus far, had allowed himself solely to contemplate. The whole adventure was to be like this striking Ion, of dazzling mien and successful feature.

With both hands on Ion's shoulders, Critias cried out in a loud, strong voice, "Ah-h Ion,— on time — I see, and on the instant. You find me ready. Now tell me, where is the squadron? Do we join it at the gate or on the road?"

Critias had, indeed, entirely recovered his nerve. After having told the gods what he expected them to perform, he felt easy in his mind. He had made them, in a certain measure, he felt, responsible for whatever might befall him. The gods of his great house could scarcely forget to protect so very distinguished a member of his gens, and so valuable a citizen.

"We are to start," Ion was answering, quietly, "from the outer Ceramicus. The men are already in the saddle. Your horse, and mine, as are the shield bearers, are at the door."

The announcement came like a knell to Hermione's ears. Yet she had advanced, with a smile, to greet the young man.

The tinge of pallor on Ion's handsome face, and the thinned lines along cheeks and chin, made the more acute from the close fitting helmet that framed the beautiful features, spoke to Hermione's sensitive heart, moving her to pity. This pallor and thinness, as did Ion's slight limp, reminded her that but for the long months Ion had spent upon his couch, Myrto would not be left, to comfort her own great loneliness.

And, really, for the son of a merchant, this Ion was most unexpectedly magnificent! His dignity and the lustre of his finished perfection made one almost tremble before him.

Toward Myrto, Ion was slanting his eyes, even as he answered Hermione.

Ion visibly paled. He could scarce repress his cry of amazement. Caught thus for the first time unveiled, the lovely face, upturned, with eyes widely disturbed, had seemed, not Myrto's but Maia's very own.

With a wrench Ion brought himself back to his surroundings. He smiled, in an absent way, as he felt Serapion fingering his shining armour. He answered Hermione's questions, every one. But his soul was in a turmoil. What a strange inexplicable fate was his! To love one woman, with every force and passion of one's soul and body, and to be promised in marrriage to the other — to her who was living Maia in the bud!

Ion felt Critias grasping his arm. He heard, as from a distance, the latter's indulgent, benedictory tones: Critias was pushing him onward, toward Myrto, who paled and shrank backwards, as she clasped her hands.

And Ion stood before the maiden as one stands in a dream before unreal shapes.

"Take her, Ion, my boy," he heard Critias say, "imprint your kiss. 'Tis no time to stand upon ceremonious customs. Had not tricksy fate played you false, this two months you would have called her wife!"

Ion had suddenly wakened. With Myrto's face uplifted before him, the lovely lashes wet upon still wet cheeks, he had come and quickly to all his senses.

He saw the child's trembling lip. The sight moved him strangely. He bent his tall shape as he might over a flower—

"Myrto, sweet, let me, pray, but kiss away one of those tears, even though, perchance, they be not for me."

With child-like obedience Myrto lifted her cheek. But Ion's beautiful, moved face, the shining of his large eyes, and the perfume of his scented locks, made Myrto feel a sudden, inexplicable trembling and a new sweet warmth. A flame swept her. Even as Ion's strong arm encircled her, Myrto's inborn modesty fought the flame. Was it right for a maiden to feel thus before she heard the bridesmaids' singing the Epithalamium? Would Timoleon forgive—

Then she was back to earth, and Ion's ringing shout was in her ear.

"But I have a mind to play the coward, and turn bridegroom! Sweet, sweet Myrto! your fairness makes me long to stay!" Ion held Myrto by both hands, at arms' length. He devoured her beauty; tinged with this new radiance of feeling, she was indeed doubly lovely. True Greek that Ion was, he found himself falling fast in love of this child who looked like Maia!

"Oh-h, but you see, I shouldn't like that. You are much more beautiful as a soldier."

There was a general laugh, as the family group, led by

Hermione and Critias, now made their way to the vestibule door. There the women of the household stood, looking out into the brightening dawn, and Critias and Ion also.

The breath of Mars seemed to touch one and all. Through the open street door the horses' impatient stamping brought the awful moment the nearer. The Epibates were already mounted. Lances and spears were held stifly upright. Persia's lean face and liquid eyes, and Socius' huge bulk, both men encased in new armour, loomed out of the tinted dusk.

With a half sob, Critias drew Hermione to him. "Farewell — fare thee well — best of wives and noblest of women!" was his whisper, as he buried his lips in hers. Hermione felt his very frame shaken. She found strength, however, to soothe and comfort her lord.

With her arms about her husband, she breathed down prayers and blessings. Above the sobbing voices of the slaves, of Myrto's and Serapion's now convulsive weeping, her voice, like the voice of a protecting divinity, filled the morning quiet.

"May the god of our fathers, and mighty Zeus, O dearest Critias, have you under their tender care, and bring you safe to our home altars," and she kissed the wet cheek close to her lips, with dry eyes.

Even Ion's lids were moist. With a parting tender clasp he sprang to help Critias mount his charger.

Critias, whose emotional equipment was of short theatrical duration, recovered his calm, as he stood beside his charger. The dignified bearing of the soldiers holding stiff the shining spears was the very tonic he needed.

He was able to jest as Ion and Socius both bent their strength to give his stiff knees their right fling, across the restless steed's bared back. He sent back brightened eyes and a showy smile as Ion, poising his length sideways against his lance, with a single spring, was in his seat.

There were a few last words. Hermione called to her husband "to remember her signal — a white veil waved three times — in air — at the quais;" and Ion had swept Hermione and Myrto a brilliant beaming farewell.

The two warriors gave the spur to their chargers' flanks, the lance bearers closed in, and down the crooked street the waving crests, the gleaming armour and bronze, glittered, and were gone.

There was no time to be lost. Critias and Ion spurred their chargers into a brisk trot. Critias had a double reason for gaining the Ceramicus.

Athens' streets were filled with the voices of crying women. Those who were not already at or on their way to the docks, were religiously lamenting the death of Adonis. Their dolorous cries rang upon every side.

Critias felt a superstitious shiver. He could not hold back his outburst. "Confound these dirges, Ion! They give me a creepy sensation! Of all times, for a great expedition to set sail while the women are celebrating the Adonaius! I confess it seems an unlucky venture — what with the Hermæ, and now this lamenting, on the very eve of our departure!"

As though to hurry away from ominous forebodings, Critias spurred his steed to a brisk gallop.

"Nonsense," was Ion's reassuring answer. "If our fleets waited for every omen to be favorable, there'd be no wars in Hellas!" And he laughed the young warriors' lighthearted confidence in the force of arms,

Critias did not answer the laugh. He told Ion he would meet him at the quais. Since Ion was to head his company, he, Critias could thus take his own gait. He real hope was, to bribe a god or two, by secret offering, on his way to his ship. Ion and his cavalry troop were soon dashing down between the great walls.

Ion found his thoughts strangely confused, as he rode on, ahead of his men. Longing, desire, the wild wonder at the feelings Myrto's lovely innocence had evoked, and the now renewed ache of pain at leaving Maia behind, alone in Athens, together with the welling up of auguish at parting from his father, all these crossings of passion and pain made the rattling speed at which he was going, inexpressibly soothing. Once the parting over, and then the open seas—the wide unknown!

Ion found the crowds assembled about the quais and colonnades such as to make progress all but impossible. He decided to dismount, and to work his way to his boat on foot.

Among all those thousands of faces, there were but two he longed to discover. Yet a hundred times Ion found himself stopped, embraced, and blessed. Every god in the Pantheon was bidden to protect "him who had conferred honour and distinction on the Piræus." "Come back, and you shall be our Archon!" "Burial in the Ceramicus shall be his who lifted the Piræus from the dust!" Such shouts rang in Ion's ears. Ion gave short smiling answers, and wrenched himself free.

A voice cried out from a dense group. Thrasybulous, looking a very Hercules in his tall helmet, waved for Ion to join him. Nausicaä with bent, veiled head, and Timoleon beside her, smiled their welcome. One might have thought Nausicaä a blameless wife, broken with grief, as she leant upon her husband's arm, actual tears glistening behind her veil.

The old provocative grace was in Nausicaa's gesture, as

she half lifted her veil, to let Ion see at least one pretty woman, before sailing away. She was telling him Hermione and Myrto had decided to remain behind, in the carriage, on the hill. "Hermione could not trust her feelings, poor woman — at such a moment!" And Nausicaä smiled the sad smile of conscious superiority. Her tears became her.

"My father,—dear Timoleon — have you seen him?" Ion asked, as both now edged their slow way onward.

"I saw him, a few moments ago, at the outer Colonnade," replied Timoleon.

And there they found him.

His grief consumed Crates utterly. The bravery he had shown, in the earlier hours of the morning, had now fallen from him. He had hidden his weakness, in among the group of his household slaves. At sight of Ion his cry burst from him.

"O my son! and so this is the end—the end!" He flung himself upon Ion's warm breast, as his son had neared him.

"Not so, my father, 'tis surely but the stepping forth to glory! Look up, dearest man, and let me kiss your cheek," cried Ion, helping his father to a better upright. Now his father had given way, in this amazing manner, it behooved him to lend him of his own exuberant hope and a part of his optimistic strength.

For long years, Crates was to see his Ion thus, flushed with tremulous emotion, yet clear of voice and eye.

Ion gently unclasped his father's hold. The time had come; he must speed away to gain his boat.

There was a last conclusive embrace, and Ion was gone. He had a dim sense, of a confusion, of quick cries, and of a sudden silence. His father, he was almost certain, had swooned, his slaves were bearing him homewards. "Better so," whispered Ion, to comfort his own heart. "The dear

man will be spared the torture of seeing me sail away." His own eyes were bedimmed with tears.

As Ion pushed blindly on, an arm and a slim hand, gemmed with jewels, were thrust forward, out of the crowd. Maia's hand lay upon his wrist.

He saw at a glance that she stood as the centre of a group of distinguished Athenians. Ion's eyes grazed Socrates' face; his worn, coarse mantle was close to Euripides' more costly raiment. Socrates was talking, as usual, and, as usual, his eyes were rolling. Euripides was using his eyes, but in a different way. Neither he nor Maia appeared to be listening to what the talkative philosopher was saying.

At sight of Ion, Maia had moved forward. Ion felt rather than saw, Socrates' enlightened expression, as one who had, at last, found the solution of a puzzling riddle. But Euripides looked the other way. And upon his own beating pulse, Ion felt the tremor of Maia's clasp.

In closing her hand within his palm, Ion drew her instinctively away. In an instant he had her, close, in the midst of the agitated groups of sailors, marines, of weeping peasants, staring metics, and strangers.

The two were as completely alone as they had been in the moonlit forests of Arcadia.

For a single moment, Ion held his beloved — a white image of grief — upon his arm. His eyes must feed their hungry lust of looking for one last intense survey. This was the dear face that was to haunt his dreams, to warm his days of chill absence, to make even glory seem but a poor thing!

Maia's broken, plaintive speech now filled his ears. "Beloved, come back, you — you will find me waiting — none other —"

But the lips had met. In the exquisite pain of that meeting, no speech was needed.

Slowly, like a benumbed creature, as one who could scarce bear the weight of this terrible moment — Maia released herself. The dear accents — infinitely sweet, struggling to be firm, came —

"Dearest Ion, you — you must look for me — when your boat moves, yonder, upon the steps of the sanctuary — I shall look till the last, I shall —"

But the difficult effort for control was beyond Maia's strength. In a convulsive agony of weeping she lay upon Ion's breast. His broken, loving words, his confident breathings of quick return, and the strength of his own moved feeling brought quieted nerves.

When Maia lifted her lips for a final meeting, she lisped, between the quickened gasps for breath,—"There—yonder—on—on the steps of Aphrodite's temple, I—I shall watch your boat until—"

Once more Ion's passionate kiss was drowning speech. As she released herself, Maia found herself swept backwards. Ion had led her to her friends.

"O listen! — and you, dear Socrates — take care of this dear woman. She is worth all your guidance," Ion now managed to stammer. With the sense that his own control was ebbing, he ran, not daring to send a backward look.

Ion heard the crowds' parting cries and sobs. A surging chorus they rose, to echo his own great anguish.

From the admiral's boat there came the clear trumpet notes. It was the signal. All must embark. There was the mighty tumult of clashing armour, of rushing feet, of struggling thousands.

The crews were soon in readiness. The oarsmen were seated. With hand shot out and arm ready, they were waiting for the next expected signal.

"Silence in the boats!" presently chanted, sonorously, the Keleustes.

A mighty stillness fell upon the sea and land. Then, the prolonged notes of the trumpet announced the great moment had come.

On every deck the flash and glitter of silver and golden goblets caught the strong sun's light. With one accord, officers, Ebibatæ, crews and marines, and all the mighty throng upon the shore turned their faces eastward.

As the goblets were lifted, after the pouring of the wine, the voice of the herald was heard, rising in prayer. One by one officers and crew joined in the praying. And the voices of praying thousands, from the shores, made the clear Greek air ring with the rhythm of passionate pleading.

As the prayer ended, there rose up the stirring notes of the war-pæon. The martial chant, sung as never before had Athens sung it, rang up to the golden skies. It throbbed against the conscious shores.

The listening hills heard. As they felt the mounting chorus swell to triumphant climax, they deepened their morning blues, and the dawn of the breaking day, crowning their tops, showed long lines of sparkling light.

Never before, in all her history, had Athens invoked the gods with such unanimous intensity of feeling.

As the chanting died, the order for action rang out. The Thranitæ shot forth, as one man, their strong hands. Their arms now worked the great oars. The noise of the rythmical beat of thousands of blades smote the purple waters.

One behind the other, in single file, trireme after trireme followed. As though to make display of the greatest fleet the Empire of Athens had as yet sent forth, the Admirals spread before the eyes of those left behind,— before metics, strangers, Attican hill-folk, Piræans, and Athenians alike—the unsurpassable splendour of the vast fleet.

This was Alcibiades' moment of triumph. From the Admiral's ship, he raised aloft his golden shield. He flashed

the sculptured Loves and Graces in the light of the rising sun. He waved the shining oblong now up, now down, in mimic combat. Men saw clearly what was meant. Thus had Alcibiades fought Athens. Thus had he conquered. The sailing forth of this greatest of fleets was his triumph, the triumph the Loves and Graces upon his splendid shield typified. By his all-conquering charms of mind and person, in the teeth of opposition, surmounting even religious fanaticism, Alcibiades had won.

Shouts and applause greeted this the central figure of the expedition.

Before the crowds had wearied of shouting, a sudden change in the movement of the foremost vessel elicited fresh enthusiasm. The boats were racing as they headed for Ægina. Till the last vessel had rounded the Island, Athens stood, breathless. Then cheers broke out. Long and loud they rang, as all Athens strained wearied eyes to see the very last of the boats.

When the violet blue waters were at last left empty, the crowd turned, and broke. Sobs and cries followed hard upon the glad shouting.

Slowly, mournfully, Hermione and Myrto crept back, as did the moving thousands, to find the awful spectres of apprehension and dread, painted against the gay skies. For all the youth and the manhood of Athens had sailed away.

Only one shape lingered on.

Long after the quais and harbours were emptied of life, Maia's violet shape stood erect. Her face was turned seaward. Veil and scarf hung, limp, from her hand. Only once had she been sure of having caught sight of Ion's hand, raised in answering salute, to her waiving. Socrates and Euripides were gone. But still Maia lingered.

The lapping of the brilliant-hued waters soothed her anguish. The burn of the Attican sun warmed her chilled

### ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

360

veins. Xerxes, as he had sat on his golden throne, on the bare hill, yonder, had felt thus, when he watched the waters that swarmed with his fleets' immensity, grow black with wrecks and red with human blood.

Maia through her blinding tears seemed to see blood upon the bright waters. The sound of breaking ships also crashed upon her ears, as she sank, sobbing, upon the Temple steps.

## BOOK IV - SYRACUSE

### Chapter XXXI

#### A BARBER'S STORY

Two years and more had passed.

The autumnal sun was kindling, as for centuries it had fired to deeper tones, the paling tints in Athens' coronal of hills. The glow on the Parthenon was as golden as ever it had been. The old wondrous magic of this moment of transfiguration was upon land and sea. As in the festival rite, this flaming torch of colour swept on; the topaz columns of the great Temple seemed to pass to the chorusing hills their magical lighting. From thence to the distant peak of Arcadian Cyllene, translucent mountains and glorified skies were fused and blent.

This had been the hour when Athenian porticoes and colonnades were wont to be crowded.

They were strangely quiet, on this golden dying of the day.

The statues of the gods were as thickly massed as when Maia had passed their beauty in review, from the steps of the Theatre. The statues were not more still than were the slipping figures of the women who now hurried onward. These had a furtive, timid air. Himatia were swept close about faces and throats, and the look of these faces, from between the thick folds, seemed to emphasize the chill in the atmosphere, that enveloped the city.

There was the peculiar brooding, the quiet of adversity in the air.

When a citizen emerged from a side street, he was seen more often than not, to be in armour. The clinking spurs, the rattle of sword or lance, startled the stillness. Slaves had, apparently, but little time for gossip. The roar of tongues was sensibly diminished.

Yet the city was full — and the Attican plain was deserted. Farmers, hill folk, trembling wives and aged mothers, as were also flocks and cattle, were crowding every open space in Athens.

King Agis, the Spartan, with an army of Spartans in trim armour, had driven farmers and flocks before them, to seek refuge in the city, as wolves hound sheep.

Though Agoras and Porticoes were emptied of loungers, the watch towers and forts were packed with soldiers. Athens was become an armed camp. Night and day, every Athenian able to bear arms, was on guard. Night and day mighty King Agis, when he had a mind, swept down from the heights of Dekelia, to remind Athens what these two years had brought to her — and to make the bravest show paling lips at the awful thought of what still might befall.

Yet, men still wore beards. Whether waked in times of peace, by cock's crows, or in war times by trumpets, still will beards grow and still must they be shorn.

One barber, at least, in the Piræus, drew the best beards still left at home, to fall beneath his razor.

Eumolpus, long since, before Sparta had taken advantage of Athens' defenceless state to invade her territory — Eumolpus had clearly seen where trade was going. The Poikile was as bare of fashion as a babe's cheek of manhood's growth of hair. No barber with brains behind his curly locks, remained to face seats — all in row — as empty as were the colonnades.

Eumolpus, therefore, took his razors, his scents, and his perfumes down to the docks.

Reduced as was Athens' commerce, ships still went out to sea. Captains and ships' mates had a fancy still, for going aboard with trim beards and hair cut in the latest military fashion.

Eumolpus therefore, though far from happy, was still taking a mild flavoured content. Not only drachmæ flew his way, but news also. And a man who had news, in these days, and from reliable nautical sources, was a public benefactor.

News, as it happened, for the past two months, had been growing scarce and still more scarce. Yet the times were never more ticklish. For the second great fleet, under Demosthenes, had been sent forth. It was time, and high time, for the glad news to come, of his having, together with what was left of Nicias' fleet, entered the Great Harbour, at Syracuse.

Long since, as Eumolpus was tired of repeating—"Surely long since victory is ours—at last. Captains and seamen are so busy, doubtless, hanging up trophies and celebrating their great victory, as they are, also, in the burdening of their ships with all the spoils and booty, they have no time left for home despatches."

This optimistic view being Athens' hope — was received by the barber's customers with smiles, if those sitting beneath his skilled fingers were Hellenes, or with doubting looks, if bound for Corinth or the Peloponnesus.

On this brilliant September afternoon Eumolpus had a customer exactly to his liking. A ship, small, somewhat battered, having met rough seas, it was reported, had come to anchor in the roads. The barber, among others, had been down to take a look.

The coming of a ship, from foreign parts, was a novelty, in these days. And every ship that came might bring the right news. This boat had made its way up from Italy. It carried a cargo of dried grapes and some neutrals.

One of these latter — a tall passenger — on landing, had looked about him, with inquiring eyes. As he lounged onward, beyond the outer Colonnade, he came to a stop before Eumolpus' bright shop.

Eumolpus had watched the beard coming along the street with the growing fury of a man whose skill with a razor is known far beyond his city. He thought better of its owner when the stranger, with beaming intelligence, at a first glance at the empty shop, showed his conclusions, in a satisfied smile. He nodded to Eumolpus, entered, and sat down.

Though not a word had been spoken, the barber approved — for a wonder — of the customer's silence. Here would be a listener in a hundred! One who could read the highest professional skill at sight, and who could tell you — at a single glance — he was pleased to find empty chairs, that he might not have to wait, was surely a man as packed full of wisdom, as he might prove to be later, invaluable as a distiller of news.

The stranger, being seated, lifted his chin. From it fell the beard that made the barber's fingers fairly quiver even as he held it between finger and thumb. Once his scissors at work, and this Scythian abomination would fall.

"For one who has but lately come to Athens, dear sir, it must indeed be strange to see her docks as empty," was Eumolpus' courteous beginning.

The stranger closed his eyes, in assent. To nod, with sharp edged scissors worked with amazing skill, was out of the question.

"And strange it would be to us — had we not, in these two years, grown used to worse than docks as vacant as are all our banqueting halls. Ah well! may I never drink my pay in pure good fortune again, if it does not seem to me ours, in spite of all her recent misfortunes, is still the mightiest of cities."

Eumolpus gave a clip to the beard that sent half its length into the white apron.

It might have been the natural feelings of a man at losing so much, at a single snip, of what he had, perhaps, considered, mistakenly, as a rare ornament, that gave to the stranger's right eye, slanted sideways, a look of such peculiar, piercing fixity.

"It's nearly off — dear sir," said Eumolpus, soothingly, "one more — a closer cutting will relieve you of such a marvellous growth. Hem! Well — as I was saying, Athens has proved herself to be all she claimed. She is indeed the wonder of the world — a little too close? Ah-h! I see — you still think we follow Alcibidian fashions, and wear short beards. Dear me! Even the custom of the wearing of beards is sufficient to prove a man's downfall! Since Alcibiades' fall, if you believe me, not a youth in Athens would dare to show himself with hair curling tight about his chin! The Salaminian — had it but brought the traitor back, might have been the re-instating of that fallen idol — and of short beards. But now — well, the military fashions show the dullest, how Alcibiades' going over to Sparta has roused Athens to turn patriot."

Eumolpus paused. His customer had once more given him that peculiar, searching glance. If he had anything of interest to communicate, why did he not tell it, instead of looking it forth? What with heating irons, and running back and fro, any man who loved speech could have had ample time, between the firing of the irons and the curling process, to recount his whole history, and that of his city. This customer was obviously of the hateful, silent sort. Well, one was not an Athenian for nothing. Eumolpus

knew more ways than one of prying a man's lips open. Obviously, the stranger cared nothing for Alcibiades and all that his treachery had brought upon Athens.

He would try him on another side. Some men answered to the religious appeal.

"What a contrast now to Nicias! There's a man! and and there's where Athens has shown herself great again. Her trust in her leaders has been her glory. In these two years how she has proved to Nicias how Athens, when she loves, a man can trust him! What other city would show our belief, our confidence, our patience? Hurt you, Sir? I'll take a cooler iron—

"When Nicias' letter came — some ten months since — perhaps, Sir, you were not in Athens? Well, never did Athens prove herself as glorious. All history will ring with the answer we gave. Such a meeting at the Assembly!"

The barber now felt the mounting glow of one who has practised the true orator's trick—he had roused to excited listening one who began as an indifferent hearer! For his customer's eyes were fairly blazing. Talking was as easy and pleasant as to hear drachmæ pouring into the box.

"Well—as I was saying—when the dreadful news came—and of all cities—to Athens, mighty Mistress of the Seas—what was our answer? You and all the world know. We—who are called fickle! Well fickle Athens having put her faith in Nicias, believed him when he told the worst. Fickle Athens swallowed shame. One great armament having been all but lost, voted then and there another and one well nigh as great. Out of our bright waters it sailed, taking the last of our true manhood, with clever Demosthenes to lead them.

"And Sparta was here - knocking at our very gates!

"I see you are asking, Sir, with that speaking eye of

yours — how we have stood the latest — Well — I confess — the most disturbing news. Well — we know now, Syracuse, probably, never can be ours — but there'll be a great battle presently — a great victory. Oh-h — I don't deny Athens is anxious — these reverses tell upon the stoutest heart. Still, we'll come forth triumphant — though — in this war we may not humble Syracuse — still — once the real victory won —'

Neither the barber's sentence nor his curl were ever finished.

With a sudden spring, the now no longer bearded man flung his covering from him. He stood on his feet, looking down at the mess that lay there. Scissors, and irons, and perfumes had been swept to the ground by his violence. And yet even the barber made no outcry.

For he still held aloft the more recently heated iron—for safety. In all his experience no such madman had ever before confronted him, had ever before terrified skilled fingers about to twist coarse hair into curl.

The stranger's madness was of short duration. His breath now came easier.

When the gentleman spoke, Eumolpus saw at once he was of good birth, now his beard was cut — for he spoke softly. His voice was disturbing, so quiet and controlled was it, for one whose actions had been so violent.

"And this is all you know — my poor man? No other news has reached you — or Athens — these past weeks?"

The gentleman spoke with such ironical commiseration Eumolpus felt his irons in the air begin to quiver. The very fate of Athens seemed to be thus trembling in mid-air.

The stranger went on voicing awful fate.

"You know nothing of the fate of your great Fleets?—
of the blocking of the Great Harbour?"

He waited as though to hear the barber's indignant de-

nial. Instead he was facing terror — a man in a panic of fear — an echo. For Eumolpus, dropping his nerveless arm, was repeating — with ashen lips —

"The blocking of the Great Harbour?"

"Why yes—that is now stale news—to Sparta and Corinth and Thebes. Your fleets are lost—man—to the last boat! The crews are all dead or drowned—and your army either cut to pieces, or made prisoner—Nicias and Demonsthenes, by this time—are food for Syracusan crows. Your Empire of Athens—where is it?"

The stranger's exulting words came to a stop. His excited gestures were sawing the air for his own pleasure; for now 'twas Eumolpus who had appeared to be suddenly and hopelessly seized with folly.

With a resounding crash, his irons rang down upon the concrete.

For a single instant the stranger had thought to have need of his arms for other purposes than for expressive gestures.

The barber first shot forth his head, as though that finish to his shape had no connection whatever with his frame-work. Then his face grew grey, of unpleasing length, and the eyes rolled wild and loose. Words or cries of some sort struggled obviously, to form upon the hanging lips — but none came. Instead a sudden, seemingly purposeless motion seized the man — a wild glance, a strange uncouth attempt to gasp or groan, a last haggard showing of an ashen face, and the barber whirling on his heel, was gone.

He flew out of his shop, as a stone is shot from a catapult. The direction of his course seemed to take him down to the highroad, towards the walled thoroughfare, to Athens.

The stranger had followed the mad barber out to the threshold of his shop. He had called — had cried out to

him there was still more to hear — that he, also, would go with him to the city — would indeed take him there.

The stranger's voice was talking to the golden September air. The barber had run as ran the runner from Marathon—to tell of victory. There were only the scented shop, the perfumes, the unguents, and the steel implements about, to prove that this barber who had gone mad, on the hearing of two months' old news, had once been entirely sane.

For a moment of talk with himself, the stranger still lingered. Some one might come in, to listen to the end of his old tale, that was, apparently, so new.

No one came. The Agoras of the Piræus seemed as emptied of life as were the great docks. The very air had the feel of misfortune. Such an air was good to breathe—to the greedy lungs of a gloating Corinthian—for such he was although he had passed himself off as an Italian.

It was the sign of Corinth's triumph and of Athens' fall!

"The Empire of Athens—ha ha! Where are her conquests, her ring of victory, her island allies now! But—by my beard that has fallen—humbled though she be—I doubt her good humour when she hears the news! O ye highly honoured Athenian gods—ye'll hear some groans and curses— and wise men, I take it, are best and safest—when Athens' roused—at home. Hey you—" and he called to a man slouching by, who had the look of a sailor, "At which of the docks now does the boat lie, that plies to Corinth's Port, on this side?"

The man told him. And the stranger bent his steps thither.

# Chapter XXXII

#### TIMOLEON'S RETURN

Two days later, a fisherman's boat that had waited for the morning's rising of the Etesian wind, clapped on full sail, to round Sunion's rocky coast.

It was a day and a breeze to make a mariner exultant. There were clear skies, every coast-line was bright and sharp, and the brisk wind was in the right quarter. The skipper tied his sheet. With only the tiller to work, a man could look about him.

As the boat shot past the tongue-like promontory, something stirred in the bottom of the boat. The man or the beast that had lain like the dead, came, languidly, to life.

The tattered sail cloth that had served as a shelter and covering in one, was feebly thrust aside. After a struggle, the crouched shape came to an unsteady upright. The form was that of a man. The face, gaunt, haggard, worn obviously by want and disease, yet showed lines that proved race.

The man turned his eyes toward Sunion. The shining of the sun's rays on the polished columns of the famous Temple of Poseidon, now in clear view, seemed to prove the eyes' weakness.

The skipper's fare lifted a wasted arm and hand, to shield his gaze. And then he sat down. The effort to look and to stand were beyond his strength.

Once, again, however, the stranger raised his arms. He held them as high as he could. And his lips moved. Mighty Neptune was obviously receiving his due, from one whose state proved his sad fortunes.

The skipper looked across at his fare, with scarce concealed scorn. His own swarthy skin, piercing dark eyes, and his curiously painted boat, with its foreign look and build, proclaimed the man no Greek, but a barbarian.

The Italian's scornful smile said as loud as though he had spoken, as he eyed his human freight's impulsive devotion—"what good were Athens' gods now, and to a ruin of a man as shattered at this—or her Empire?"

The Italian nursed his scorn, for it warmed him. To bring Greeks thus, back to proud Athens, made even an Italian exultant. Yet no scoffing word escaped him. For his fare was precious—in spite of his tattered state. Until Athens was reached the skipper must wait for his pay. And there—well, there was always that good friend, one's knife, close at hand, if this remnant of a man must be made to eat his boastful lies first, and after, the dark streets of the city would tell Athens an Italian's way of dealing with a lying Greek!

The very thought of all this made the skipper let his sheet out. He brought the craft closer up, into the wind. He steered, now, very straight.

His passenger, apparently, was gaining in strength. He stood with less uncertain firmness. He was almost erect. Neck and head were eagerly thrust forward. He appeared to be on the lookout for something — a sign of some sort.

Ah-h—he had discovered his object! He had uncovered, though for one to call as shapeless a thing as that which covered the long, unkempt locks a cap, was a laughable absurdity.

Once again the Greek's lips were moving. And he was writhing, as though in pain, or as a man twists when overmastered by some uncontrollable emotion.

The skipper's lips emitted a cry. For his fare, now, was

weeping. The tears coursed down the deep creases in the thinned cheeks, as Italian alpine-fed rivulets course between gorges, in spring.

And the passenger's eyes, fountains of tears though they were, had never moved. They were held set and fixed. And in all the landscape, now Sunion was rounded, only one object stood out, that could thus rivet a man's eyes.

Far out, to the East, Athena Promachus' bronze helmet — yes — and now the tip of her monster spear were in sight!

What was there, in heaven's name, in the far-away glittering of a goddess's armour, to make a soldier cry thus like a woman?

The skipper himself, as did every mariner worthy the name, had, of course, been on the look-out for that bit of bright shining against the sky. The goddess's spear was the sign that told sorry seaman just how far, according to the wind's veering, it would be before the docks could be made, before a stiff pull at good Chian wine and fresh figs were to be had.

But for a man to weep, at Athena's showing the tip of her armour! Well, when a man was hungry, tears came as easy as to a woman's eye. And his face, nobleman though he had announced himself, had clearly seen starvation close. His pinched nostrils and wasted body told the story.

The Piræan port was finally reached. The landing was soon made. The Harbour was as emptied of ships as they found soon after, the Colonnades to be of loungers. Even the fare showed his growing wonder, by the new strength that had come to him.

He stared, and looked, and walked, only as men stare and walk in dreams.

The skipper perceived the Athenian had taken on a new manner. Tattered, dirty, unkempt though he was, others besides the skipper recognized the tread and voice of one well-born.

The empty docks, the all but defenceless Harbour, the silent markets, this languid stir of life, everywhere, had obviously overwhelmed, at first, the Athenian. Soon, however, all his wits came to him. He knew where to go, and whom to see. He led the skipper to a certain part of the inner Agora, with the step of one treading home soil.

He asked a few sharp questions, of one or two idlers. But he answered none. Yet any one could see both fear and the ache of curiosity in the men's eyes. But the Athenian put them off — merely said he had come a long, hard journey. He was now in search of a cart, or carriage, a vehicle of some sort to convey him and the skipper to Athens. The loungers, finding they were to gain nothing before the closed door of such tightly shut lips, left him.

A farmer's cart was presently found. The Athenian and the skipper were soon seated within the vehicle.

At the first watch tower, rising up above the walls, the tattered gentleman gave a sharp cry. Once more he seemed in pain. The sound of the metallic rattle of armour, on moving men, within the towers, stirred the sudden colour to flame upon the wan cheek.

"Is Athens in a state of siege?" he asked, wonder in his voice, of the boy seated beside him.

"It's as good as besieged. The Spartans give us no peace." The lad's tones were sulky. "We must be on the lookout night and day. We are all worn out—keeping watch, both young and old,—I've been in the towers days and days, and never my armour laid aside."

"How long has this been?"

The boy gave the tattered gentlemen a curious look. A crooked smile curved up towards his ear, as he said, slyly, "Only a soldier, or a marine, one who has been fighting

Sikels could ask such a question. All Greece knows Sparta has been harrying us for a year and more. Perhaps you're fresh from the wars," and the boy ran his eye over the torn tunic, the worn military mantle, and the sandals whose thongs showed metal clasps, in tatters.

But the Athenian could not be drawn. He asked more questions, with his new lordly air. And as there is everything in the way questions are asked, he got his answers.

The military life quickened, as the three neared the famous City gate. Here, before the nine openings, were the first signs of the old Athenian bustle and brisk movement. Soldiers and sentinels were everywhere passing in and out. The slaves at the Fountain were thick, and the filling of amphoræ was long, for armed men—some mere striplings, indeed, others with grey beards—made the task of drawing water, for women slaves, a pleasant one.

At the gate leading towards the Inner Ceramicus, the Athenian gave the order to stop. Borrowing a rude tablet from the farmer driver, he wrote some lines on the roughly prepared surface.

"Take this man," he commanded, pointing to the Italian, "to the house of Timoleon, the one near the lower end of the Agora. It has two entrances, and one is a sandal shop. Give the slave you will find within the shop, this leaf, he will pay you both, and well. Farewell," he added, "and thanks," to the skipper.

The Athenian descended. He moved onward, alone. He drew his shabby mantle close about his gaunt frame.

Scarce had he gone the length of half the coppersmith's quarters, in the precinct of Theseus, when he started, stared, and stopped.

For the first time, a look of joy, rapturous, complete, irradiated his worn face. He felt his knees tremble. He

found he must lean against a small but newly erected Hermæ, for support.

The sight that had thus unnerved him was merely a woman-shape.

A tall, graceful form, draped from head to foot in a dust-colored mantle, was moving slowly toward him. In her hands she held a covered dish of some sort. Behind her, a slave, a Persian, to judge by his colour and eyes, likewise bore a vessel, that needed cautious handling.

The lady came on — and on. She walked less surely as she approached the standing figure. She had not as yet raised her eyes, yet she felt rather than saw the coming obstruction to her path.

She had now reached the motionless, staring figure. She lifted questioning eyes. Why was her way thus barred, and by whom?

The large eyes swept the gaunt, yellow face, the tattered shape — they grew wide, were fixed. Then the lady's cry came. With the dawning of conscious recognition first horror, and then a wild joy rang up with the cry.

The covered dish she held had dropped. Its metallic ring, as it fell, made the clanguor one with the sharp, fierce cry.

"O Timoleon — dear Timoleon! Come — at last! At last! —"

And Maia's head fell upon Timoleon's lean shoulder.

As Timoleon feebly clasped Maia to him, his trembling kiss upon her bright locks was all he could command.

Over her bowed head, he whispered broken, confused words — of the delight it was to see her, to feel her near, to have her the one to bring him welcome.

The effort to thus command himself proved to be beyond his control. As Maia lifted her head, and came, slowly, to an upright, it was her turn to comfort, to sustain. Timoleon's emanciated form swayed, his yellow lids closed, he had all but fallen. But Mago swept to the rescue; he and his mistress were bearing, between them, this pitifully shrunken Timoleon, upon their arms.

"Quick, the wine, Mago! I can hold him, thus. Oh-h," wailed Maia, as she saw Timoleon open pale eyes, and then, at the first touch of the wine, gulp at the fragrant cup with the frantic haste of a starved man—"Oh, dear Timoleon, not so fast! There, thus, 'twill thus the better revive you." She purposely spilled part of the spiced liquid, lest it brought a new danger.

Could this indeed be Timoleon, this savage creature, with the thirst, and the wild, uncontrolled hunger of a beast?

Maia bent over him with a deepened, a more agonized tenderness; now she steadied his trembling hand, now she propped his head.

Timoleon's face wore, at last, a slight tinge of colour; and in his eyes there shot the familiar bronzed lighting.

"Can this, indeed, be true? It is thus you return to us, after all these years? Are you—Is Ion—" Maia breathed softly. But no answer came. The flush on Timoleon's face had died away, his cheeks had turned to a pale yellow. His eyes shot forth wild looks. "The earth turns," he murmured, groping for Mago.

"Could we but bear him to a better air"—cried Mago. "Shall we try the steps of the Temple? 'Tis no distance, I can carry him thither."

"Yes, yes, to the Temple." And between the four tender arms, Timoleon was carried aloft, to the Theseum.

The wisdom of the change was soon perceptible. Timoleon began to draw in deep breaths of the freshened air. He managed to smile, reassuringly, into Maia's anxious, tearful eyes. As she held the cup anew, close to his lips, he murmured, "Dear Maia — your looks and care are wine enough —"

"No—no! eat, drink, dear man. O it is safe, now, to pour down the wine!" Maia's fingers held the cup; next her trembling fingers were crumbling bread, or she was tendering a sesame cake. All the while the unfelt tears were pouring from her eyes. Even her over-mastering impatience—for news—for learning Ion's fate—was overwhelmed, for a time, by the pity and tender anguish roused by looking upon Timoleon.

Between her care and Mago's help, Timoleon was at last as well placed as he could be. Maia had propped his head against a column of the great Temple. Behind his shoulders and head she had swept her mantle, for a pillow. Mago, it was hurriedly agreed, should hasten to the house, for a litter and the slaves.

Thus resting, fed, and with Maia's face to scan, Timoleon took his first deep draught of looking. Eyes looked into eyes. Each read there the story of the pain and suffering, the long waiting that had worn one lovely face to thinned lines, and the yet untold horrors that had brought to such weakness and ruin, the other.

Maia moved forward. With the handkerchief she found in her girdle, she dried Timoleon's tears, and then her own. Timoleon thanked her by a feeble pressure on the hand he had found strength to grasp, as it lay within her lap.

"Dear Maia, it is not only I who am changed. You, and Athens also, have suffered, and deeply. Tell me, is the worst indeed befallen us? Is Athens surrounded? Are all the citizens on guard?"

Even as Timoleon questioned, he moved his head about the curve of the column, as a sick man turns upon a pillow. He sent his anxious eyes about, below, above him. As though to seek his answer in the security of the beauty that lay, like a tranquil palace of splendour, below and above the Temple steps, his gaze covered the long lines of glistening statues that marked the road leading from the Ceramicus to the Areopagus, and beyond, aloft, it swept to where the mighty Acropolis, crowded with Temples, glowing in colour, uplifted, still, the Phidian master-piece that shone forth, untouched, unharmed.

"Zeus be praised! The gods still sit in their Temples," he lisped, in accents that seemed faint echos.

Maia answered, reassuringly, "Yes, at least, the gods are safe."

Broken as was the recital she now gave of the two years' disasters and calamities that had befallen Athens, hard pressed as was the city—"Since Sparta has been at Dekelia, no one of us has known what fate to expect—Yet, O Timoleon, still Athens is valiant, still she fights, still is she strong,—only—since yesterday—"

Maia stopped. Her eyes were reading Timoleon's face. How much did he know? How much could he bear? Clearly, his own story he was, as yet, in no state to tell. Oh-h—dared she now ask news of Ion? Surely now!—

But Timoleon's hollow tones were asking, with a fresh, but feeble pressure of his limp hand —

"Since yesterday, Maia? What has happened since yesterday?"

"Oh-h we know not what to believe." Maia began, thrusting her own great need in the background. "We are all in a panic of fear — your coming will bring us some light. The whole city is gone mad with excitement, and worse. The noise you hear yonder, from the Stoa, are the groans, the cries of rage, the tears — yes, the weeping of strong men — and yet no one knows."

"Knows what? For the sake of Zeus in Heaven, let

me know the worst!" cried Timoleon, his old authoritative tone cutting the clear air.

Maia drooped her head. Her hands had fallen, they lay limp upon her lap. Then her voice, sweet, plaintive as the complaining notes of a flute, came—"

"'Tis indeed, the worse, if true. A barber came up from Piræus, yester noon. A stranger, a Corinthian, it appears, just landed straight from Sicily, brought him news of our defeat,— of — of our great losses."

Maia's stretching eyes were watching Timoleon. He seemed strangely calm, for one who was hearing such horror.

"Go on"—she heard him say. And his clasp now, upon her fallen hands, was firm—was imperative.

"It seems, the stranger said, that our fleet," Maia's words were scarce audible—a great weakness seized upon her,—"had been sunk, in the great harbour, and that our soldiers—that Nicias, Demosthenes, were captured or—Oh-h Timoleon—Timoleon, ease my breaking heart—it is false—it cannot be true? Athens is not lost—ruined—and—and Ion, surely you and Ion came back together?"

In uncontrollable misery, Maia flung herself downwards. Her bowed head, shaken with sobs long controlled, lay upon the Temple steps. All she had withheld, all she had endured, suffered — of apprehension, of tortured doubt, of the nightmare of dread,—had overcome her brave spirit. Woman and patriot were crushed, in utter anguish and horror. More she felt she could not bear. Were more to come 'twould end her.

Timoleon's voice, pathetic in its broken strength, brought Maia to calmer, less passionate weeping. She managed to face him, with tear-stained face — as he named Ion.

"Indeed I have, alas! no good news of Ion. Nay, dear,

wait. He may have escaped, as did I — though mine was a miracle. He may be taken prisoner, and as a prisoner one of his rank ought not to fare badly."

"Was he wounded — hurt?" Maia gasped, dabbing the tears away, to see more clearly. Inwardly she was seeing her way, very clear indeed, to rescuing, to ransoming Ion — were he indeed taken prisoner.

Timoleon's answer was not wholly clear. He hesitated, admitted that on the last day — for yes, the fleet had been entirely destroyed — the fight in the great harbour had ended in overwhelming victory for the Syracusans, Ion, he had indeed, seen. Through the horrible, maddened whirl of battle — and though he was blood-stained —

"He was fighting like a demi-god, Maia — none could resist him. For the single second I saw him, I saw his sword — our ships lay for a while close together — pierce all who withstood him — he struck two to earth — was leaping at a third — when my boat went down — was cut to pieces —"

"And 'twas the last you saw - you -" Maia's lips could not frame her despair.

"Yes, for as the enemies' prow struck our trireme, Alas, yours, dear Maia!—a murderous Sikel with the flat of his sword—stunned me. I sank, out of sight, and that saved me. When I came to, I was lying on yellow sands—far out, far beyond Ortygia. Who or what had carried me hence, I know not,—have never known. But there I lay. Knowing my danger, hearing Syracuse shouting itself crazed—knowing such shouts could mean naught but one thing—a great victory, and our defeat, I looked about me for shelter—for a place to hide, for a hole, a cave in the shore wherein to crawl. Oh-h those days, those long fearsome nights, the terror, the surprises, the hunger! and then, the long fever!"

"Where were you, dear Timoleon?" To hear brave Timoleon voice such anguish made Maia all pitying, loving sympathy. She had now dried her eyes. She was grasping Timoleon's lean arm—her eyes shed a celestial tenderness. For life had come to her dying hope. Since Timoleon was alive, saved, surely Ion— But Timoleon was saying—

"I found a cave — in a rock. There was a curve in the beach. By rolling a stone against the cave in the day time, I was safe. The Syracusan ships passed close. I could hear all they said. But words, even news of one's fleet, don't feed a man. But for live crabs in the sand — I should not now be here."

"Timoleon!"

"Then, one night,—days, weeks it must have been—I saw a painted boat creep by. And a man, a black-eyed Italian stood in the bow. I crawled out of my cave, I was too weak then to stand, but I signalled. The skipper drew in his sail. And he listened. When I named the price—to Athens, he understood— Thus came I—am here. Have none others arrived—are none escaped, save only me?"

Maia told him, he alone, and the stranger yesterday, had been the first to reach Athens. Nearly two months had passed since reliable news of the fleet had been heard.

"And that poor barber — Eumolpus — you remember, he whose shop was in the Poikèlé — he wishes now, I am sure, he had not spoken. For after having told his great news to the Senate, he must tell it to the Assembly, and the people, maddened with a sense of such dreadful tidings, called upon him to produce his authority — and as he could not — for the supposed Corinthian had departed, the Senate have put him to torture."

"To torture!" echoed Timolion, with a shout. As the

cry came, he struggled to his legs—he was hurrying in a helpless way to adjust his mantle. "You say they are subjecting Eumolpus to torture!—Oh Maia, let us hasten! I have a tale to tell that will make torture seem but a jest. They must release him. Come—we must go—though I must still lean on you, dear."

Mago and the litter stood waiting; they found both below the steps.

Timoleon, with Maia walking beside him, went through Athens' sunned streets to where the Senate still sat, waiting for dreadful truth to be shrieked a lie, on a barber's lips, as the rack stretched his limbs apart.

### Chapter XXXIII

#### ATHENS HEARS THE TRUTH

TIMOLEON was far beyond the torture of being even sensible of Athens' attitude, on her hearing of the dreadful news. In Maia's house, he lay, for days, in delirium. When he came to his senses, Athens had alas! been forced to come to hers. Other soldiers, other battered starving hoplites had crawled back to Athens. The tale they told but completed the awful tragedy.

About Timoleon's couch, during his period of convalescence, old political friends quickly gathered. The roar of rage, of tortured fear, of eating apprehension that now convulsed Athens, was heard, in murmured, softened accents, about his luxurious bed. The generals came, for fuller military details; senators and leaders for counsel, and all stood, to chorus despondency.

Timoleon, from his sick bed, rose to brave heights. The evil in his nature seemed purged away. He who in these two terrible years, had faced every fluctuating fortune that war, and an imbecile commander, can bring to pass, brought his now trained powers, his disciplined forces and real talents to the help of dear Athens.

In the cool of the early autumnal nights, long were the talks, plans, confidences, and counsels he and Maia held. Maia's grasp of political affairs, her close touch with Athenian life in its larger, loftier aspects, her two years' friendship with Socrates, with the great poets and dramatists, with Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes—the great centre her house had become for all that was most glorious that

Athens still could boast, made her advice and suggestion invaluable.

As the days wore on, and Timoleon rose to take his place among those who sought to lead and direct the distracted city, Maia it was who began to sicken. Her nights were passed in crying aloud, in shivering, in telling her people, that unless, soon, news should come from Ion, either she must die — must end her life — or she must go to his rescue, she must seek him, the whole world over, if need were.

"He is alive! I tell you! I know it — I feel it. And somewhere, in some horrible way — he is suffering. I see, night after night, his dear face, tortured, drawn with torment. Ah my god! are they killing him — slowly, with torture? Oh! Oh — me miserable! What can I do? Where fly? Oh Mago, think! think! Timoleon, be kind, — a plan — any plan! For do you not see I am losing my senses — here — with folded hands?"

Folded her hands were not, for a single waking moment. Laced with torture as was every instant of conscious living, still Maia drove her distracted energies to the accomplishment of brave charitable deeds. She and Mago made endless journeys to the Towers. Food and wine were lavished on the sentinels. To one of these, to Serapion, son of Critias, Maia was mother, sister, and loving friend.

Serapion had been sent back from Eubœa, to complete his education, in Athenian schools, before the Spartan invasion began. "Since then, he would not go back—and Hermione and Myrto dare not return. I confess to being greatly troubled. The slaves, it appears, on their estates, are not to be trusted, in these troublous times—now Critias is dead."

"Critias dead?" cried Timoleon. Maia nodded — she went on with her tale.

"Oh-h—and have you not heard? I thought every one knew how Critias died. He made a point of making a dramatic exit—even to the very last, he played his part. Poor father!" And Maia hung a pitying sigh upon the tablet of Critias' memory.

Critias, it appeared, had been appointed one among the officers to return to Athens, a full year ago, to deliver Nicias' now famous letter, telling of his defeats and straits before Syracuse. When the lines were cried out in the Assembly, "asking for a new armament, one as great as the first, and Nicias begged to be released, because of his increasing weakness as commander; Critias' voice rang out, above the reading, with loud shouting, 'Tis I should head the fleet! were such as I in command! were we oligarchs'—he cried—and before the hissing came—he had fallen. He was carried off, dying, as they bore him. Poor dear Critias—a true Athenian—deaf to reason, proud, tenacious to the last to false ideas, to wrong convictions. See how we clung to Nicias! And yet the world calls us fickle!"

To Maia's sorrowful cynicism, Timoleon found no ready answer. The dwelling upon his old friend's sad fate, brought anew thoughts of Hermione and of sweet Myrto.

Maia divined Timoleon's unuttered questions. His sad eyes she read now, as though she loved him. And love him in a certain sense, she did. For she intended he should be nearly allied to her. He, of all men, was to be Myrto's husband.

To this end, she told him her history. Wonder, amazement, followed the telling.

Maia's tale ended with passionate outburst.

"And then — when I came to Athens, only to learn of Ion's betrothal, of his approaching marriage, something hard, cruel, savage awoke in me. I had not known such

feelings lay at the bottom of my soul — but then — they had not before been awakened.

"I vowed vengeance. I prayed and made lavish offerings to Hecate, and Hecate, alas! heard me. Though I looked upon Hermione's face, though I saw sweet Myrto—Ah-h—Timoleon, how lovely is innocence!—yet neither my mother nor Myrto turned me from my purpose. I would make good, in my turn, the curse that lay upon our house. I would prevent Ion's marriage at all costs—defeat fate—alas! you know the rest."

In tears the long recital ended. Timoleon comforted, he consoled her. The best might be hoped for. The latest of those who had escaped, had reported that forty thousand — surely an over large number — had followed Nicias on his hazardous retreat, into the Sicilian gorges.

Maia put up her hands. She shook her head. She must not give way to agitated thought. She must keep calm; the time for going to Serapion's watch upon the towers had come. Her visit and Mago's full baskets never failed this young brother, over whom she had watched as though she were Hermione.

As Maia's slave brought her mantle, to drape its folds, and Maia's worn face shone beyond the close wrappings, tightly drawn about chin and cheeks, for the day was cool, she spoke as never she had before voiced her sorrow. The pallor of her face, and the sweetness of her plaintive tones, affected Timoleon to rare feeling.

"Maia! — Maia! — as the goddess says, 'Lead me, you have found out the secret of moving me,'" he cried; and, as in the dawn of long ago, when he had lifted his hand and hers, to point towards the great Citadel, Timoleon once again enclosed her palm in his. "Maia — Maia — when women love as you love, the dear gods crown hope. We

shall yet be a family full of joy. You will have found Ion. I will have Myrto to wife, and Hermione will have two daughters, instead of one. Weep not — to such eyes, weeping should be forbidden."

Maia's tall shape bent over Timoleon. Her close enwrapped face touched his cheek, as she murmured, though the bright drops still fell,

"Your words put sorrow to sleep, dear Timoleon. Indeed you have comforted me. Await me, here. It will ease my ache of fear to know you are to be found, upon my return. I know not why, but all day I have had the feeling that news of some sort was to come."

And she left him.

Maia's apprehensive fears were verified. She returned to find her courts in an uproar. Friends had come from the Piræus, with terrifying tidings. A boat load of hoplites, who had miraculously made their escape from Messina, had landed at the Piræus.

"They report Demosthenes captured. Nicias immediately surrendered, on hearing the news. Awful had been the slaughter of our army. The Syracusan swept our men down, like ripe corn. They followed them, killing as they went. And now 'tis but a handful that's left. And these, Oh Timoleon! Oh Maia, how can I tell you?—these few thousands are dying by inches!—they are penned in like dogs!—they are rotting in the Syracusan quarries!"

Such was the tale a grey-haired general brought, from the docks. He and all who heard him, groaned and moaned. Even the strongest were not ashamed to weep.

With the passing of the first wild outburst, at the hearing of the awful fate of Athenians, a curious calm came to Maia. Her mind seemed suddenly made up. A decision and a grave one, was to be read in her solemn face. The

low, rich tones of her voice, were attuned to the inward registering of a vow.

Until her house was emptied of the agitated crowd of visitors, however, Maia kept her own counsels.

She begged Euripides and Timoleon to remain. When her courts were solitary, she swept her friends onward, to the pastas. There she unfolded her plan. Euripides knew her secret, all her life she had told him. And now she confided the project she intended to put into action, to these two, who loved her.

She should give orders to Mago to go straight to Corinth. There he was to hire a large, swift ship. He was to man it with Corinthian seamen. He was to say that "Maia, the Corinthian — rich Nirias's former companion — his widow and his heiress, was turning her back on Athens, since Athens' Empire had fallen. She longed, in common with all Athens' enemies, to see great Syracuse, to look upon the brave heroes who had brought Athens low.

"Every word of this will Corinth believe. For in her hate of Athens, to hear of others' hate, will bring her joy," cried Maia, with the new fierce flame in her eyes, that had dawned there, since the news that Ion was imprisoned—in the quarries, had come. "For I know he is there," Maia asserted, with a convincing calm that drowned all opposition. "'Twas there—I know now—I have always seen him—in those dreams of mine. He was far down—at some great depth—'twas from some awful place, dim and dark, his face shone. And his voice called, 'Maia! Maia!' O Ion, beloved, I come, I come!"

Like a Sybil, uplifted to celestial heights, thrilled with ecstatic joy, Maia's face as she threw her head back, letting forth her great cry, was the face of one transfigured. Never had her two listeners looked upon the like; never should they again. For even to hearts capable of love such as

Maia's such a tidal wave of emotion comes but once, in a lifetime.

Before she set forth, Maia, in calmer mood, bade Timoleon do for her that which she, had this great chance not come to her, had intended doing.

He must go to Eubœa. He must see Hermione; he must win, if he could, Myrto. Above all, he must look out for the fate and fortunes of these dear ones. Their state was too lonely—too isolated in far-away Eubœa. A man's care and guidance were imperative.

"And your history — dear Maia? Am I free to tell all?"

"Not yet," Maia answered, having deliberated before this her reply—"There is nothing to be gained, as yet, by confession. On my return, when I find Ion, I will ask my mother's blessing."

"But, surely, Maia, you forget, Hermione will consider, and rightly, that her daughter is still bound to Ion. She is his betrothed, still, remember."—

Maia gave Timoleon's anxious eyes, and his clever face, a peculiarly intelligent glance.

"Dear Timoleon, Hermione is not to know of my journey. If, in a month's time, I am not returned, and Ion with me, then — well — then the worst has happened. Get Hermione to promise you Myrto, if no news comes of Ion, within that space of time."

Euripides smiled. At last he had even found Maia—wonderful adorable Maia! out of whose many-sided character he had found traits that were valuable hints for several Antigones and Electras, yet Maia, also, was now proving herself a true woman. She could act the heroine, and yet could manage to plot, to play a trick upon fate! How true were all women, even the greatest, to the types he had presented!

### ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

390

Timoleon being a man, and not a play-wright, found Maia's clever suggestion only another proof of her amazing ability. Lucky he, indeed, who could have such as she to call sister!

In less than a week, Maia had started for Corinth.

## Chapter XXXIV.

#### THE QUARRIES

In Syracuse, the first, light rains of autumn had fallen. Gardens, fields, and parched soil blossomed anew, after the scorching summer's aridity. The white city rose up from its Harbours shining, glistening, carrying upward the spirals of its cypresses that cut the cobalt blue skies, like bronze lances held proudly upright.

It was the last day but one of the Festival of the Thesmophoria. The city rang with the songs and cries of women.

The chief celebrants were singing and dancing within their great building,—one carefully copied after the famous Eleusinian, at Athens. Their shouts resounded throughout the streets close to the temple.

Bands of worshippers, whose spirited piety called for more vigorous outlet, had swung, hand in hand, down from temple steps to open squares. These were to be seen swirling, in frenzied rapture, through crooked ways, and narrow streets.

Two ladies, one of whom was an unmistakeable Syracusan, were attempting to thread their way up from the lower city to the Necropolis. They found their way blocked.

A band of celebrants, a long, loose-linked chain, had stretched hands across the width of a certain street. They sang, as they danced—"Demeter—Demeter—Glory to Demeter! Sovereign goddess—give us fair offspring!—beauteous men-children to garner thy harvests—to worship

Aphrodite — to hold — to conquer the Athenians! Demeter! Demeter!"

Round and round sped the whirling, half naked, maddened group. Shouting, clapping their hands, their long hair streamed in the light breeze. All wore thick full garlands. In the frenzy of the dance, wreaths and garlands were now tossed, now swept from brows to bosom, and from open neck to swaying hips.

One of the Mænad-like circle suddenly clashed her silver cymbals high in air. She turned, swirling around the nearest street corner. She had given the signal for the ring to break, for the linked hands to be loosened, and for the gay band to whirl itself away, shouting as it sped.

The Syracusan and her companion were now enabled to proceed on their way. The Syracusan stopped for a moment, to puff and blow out her breath. For the autumn sun was hot, and the narrow street was steep.

With her draped chiton held tight in both hands, she stood, with hands on hips.

"Marvellous — is it not? Saw you ever a Thesmophoria as splendid? We Syracusans, alone, of all cities, know rightly how to honour Demeter! And this year, the dear goddess knows we have reason to worship!" The woman's eyes sparkled with pride. She craned her neck backward, as she voiced her exultation; she must see the very last of the dancers.

Her companion, a stately, golden-haired beauty, sent the Syracusan a contemptuous glance. Her tones were coolly satirical, as she answered:—

"In Athens, the matrons worship Demeter in very different fashion." Then, with an impatient start, she cried: "Are we nearing the quarries?"

"Oh-h — you'll know soon enough when we are near," laughed the Syracusan, with brutal delight, "your nostrils

will tell you, before your eyes can feast on the sight. My!
— but it's sport — to see those wretches wriggle — to behold them squirm, like the worms they are! What was it?
Did a bee sting you? They are plentiful here, and so are the flies. Ha! Ha! flies don't lack for food now!—
Well — and what makes you stumble? One would think you had the palsy. See — there they are! There's always a long string of them! You can't keep some women away from a sight like that — even on a feast day. When the theatre is full, many leave the play before it's quite done, to get the best places. Well — one more pull — and a long afternoon ahead of us to enjoy the sport!"

For a few more seconds the two made their way in silence. Then the garrulous southerner burst, anew, into speech. "You never told me where you bought these earrings. And that necklace! Your gems are worth a for-That old Nirias must have doted on you! Well. some women are lucky, and some the gods delight to scourge. Now I'm as honest as any, and as pious, vet, though I'm lawfully married. I've wished a hundred times I had served Aphrodite instead of making offering to Hera. Heigho! but life is a comedy! Where did you say you secured those doves? In Athens? Ah-h — I thought not. Corinthian artists work for women who know the true value of gems! Those poor, imprisoned Athenian women! Well - their husbands and sons are now having a taste of prison life. Ha — ha! it warms one's heart to think of them — dving like worms. Warm -- you too? Well -- let's slow our pace. There's all the afternoon before us!"

Maia was glad of the moment's rest. She had not, as yet, fully measured her strange weakness; and the trembling that now shook her frame gave her nervous fears of her lasting force. Should she indeed be able to hold to the end? Could she reach the hill-top? She swept her scent bottle

below her nostrils; she was glad to lean, panting, worn, chilled with the mounting fever of anxious apprehension, against the nearest statue-pedestal.

It was during the long sea voyage that the shining of Maia's bright certainty of hope, in her venture, had waned. Alone — with Athens and friends left far behind, sailing across new, unknown seas, a braver soul than Maia's might well have found high courage drooping. In the long days, and longer nights, no comforting visions had visited Maia's brooding despair. For the lethargy of despair was, indeed, upon her. Her soul — as had her body — had swooned beneath the langour of these southern skies. Athens' brisk, keen air swept moral tonic to one's worst state. Here, the Sicilian tropical clime made the spirit droop, sicken with eating doubt, a prey to dread despair.

Each moment, since her landing, had been prolonged torture. For she must play her part. To this Syracusan and her husband—the corn merchant who once had come to Corinth, as Nirias' house agent, he who had told Nirias the tale of the Egestæan trickery—to these two—the sole Syracusans to whom it mattered—she was come as a Corinthian—as Nirias' widow and heiress. Her journey was purely one of pleasure.

Even now, as she was pushing onward, to the quarries, Mago was haunting the markets. He was industriously spreading the lie.

Praxionoë, the Syracusan, as they mounted upward, was telling her, and for the hundredth time, that, for her part, had she been a widow, and rich "and a Corinthian," Maia's journey of all voyages was the one she would have chosen to undertake.

"Where else could you go — to gain greater pleasure? It's a feast day — here — as you have seen for yourself — every day of our week. Wait till you see the theatre

packed, and hear Syracusan shouts! That's what the Athenians heard—our shouting, as their fleet went to pieces. And the few that are alive, will never hear the like!—pity more aren't able to tell stay-at-home Athenians how Syracusans sang in chorus, from shore to shore, on that glorious day, to join in with the war-pæon! Ha! Ha! I shall hear that chorus ringing in my ears—as long as life lasts."

Would the woman never have done? For a night and a day, she and the city had echoed this, their noisy triumph. Every song was stinging torture, every cry a stab. Yet Maia bore it, as she bore now with the Syracusan's coarse gloating. Soon — Ah soon! — it must be ended, or human endurance would find its strength ebbing.

The two women had reached the top of the hill. The great theatre, hewn in the living rock, even now, at this tremendous moment, caught and fixed Maia's trained eyes. Its cylindrical perfection claimed, and won, Athenian admiration. Towards the left, above the upper tiers of seats, stretched the Necropolis. Its gleaming statues, mosaics, and bronzes glistened in the bright sunlight. The road that lay between the tombs was a glittering, gorgeously decked pathway. And below both burying-ground and theatre lay the City, its gold and marbles hurrying to meet the distant blues and the nearer jade-like greens of the great Harbour.

Maia had caught the vast outlook, at a single glance. The immensity of the Harbour made her heart strings tighten. In that vast liquid circle Athens' greatness had gone down!

The next instant she felt herself gasping for breath. The air that had been swept outward, to stifle her lungs, was of such putrid quality, she was sent, hurrying, instinctively, to seek for freer, less befouled spaces.

The Syracusan followed. She laughed, as she moved, and her eyes were aflame with pride.

"Ah-h — what did I tell you? The stench is as great as I promised — is it not? Never was there known such a smell! You're not used to it — And to us 'tis almost sweet! For they're dying yonder — by the dozens — the rotting bodies are doing their work. Come — we'll have to work hard for good places — I see the crowd's a thick one!"

Praxinoë's face, as she grasped Maia, hurrying her towards the quarries to the right, was the face of a gloating fury.

"Oh-h!" moaned Maia, though she now walked onward. For the life of her she could not help the groan voicing her anguish.

Praxinoë shot Maia a sharp, disapproving look. "Ha! Ha! A Corinthian - and soft of heart! Your tender sympathies need hardening then — for you'll see sights now to stir the stoutest! Oh, ve gods! What a crowd! How shall we ever push our way through such a throng? Ah my friend, don't crush me. There's room enough for two. if only one is polite. Did you ever see such a bold creature? Maia - look how well the folds of her chiton fall - almost as well as yours. She must have had an Athenian model. By august Athena - but Athenians know how to dress - if they have lost the art of fighting. How long did you say you were in Athens? Long enough to catch their tricks of fashion — I see that. I wonder you didn't catch a second husband. The Athenians are fine men — they looked as brave and noble, as Mars himself, that day of the great sea fight. But Lord - how our ships! —

"Good heavens — we'll never get a place. All the best places are taken — I told you they would be! You must be

close to the edge — if you wish to see the best of the sport. There — there — don't cry out — my beauties! There's room enough for two more on this bank. Ah-h-h — at last! We can see everything. That's right, bend over. Did you ever see the like? Aren't they for all the world like monkies? Nobles! these Athenians! Ah, ha! See them squirm!"

The road above the theatre, to the left, had led them to an abyss. In the black gulf that yawned below this opening, both the features of as well as the strange uses to which the deep pit of the quarry had been put, were at first confused, indistinguishable. One seemed peering into one of earth's mysterious depths, out of whose awful womb any horrors might emerge.

As though to mark the more strongly the contrast between the heaven above of Sicilian skies, and that black mouth of a hell, the upper grassy edge of the abyss was fringed with Syracusan beauties. The intense southern sunlight shone upon ripe lips, and liquid laughing eyes. Exquisitely chiselled features and young fair necks leant over the opening, gems glittered on bared arms, and pearl fillets clasped the luxuriant tresses of these richly-dowered southern types of women.

Maia had been scarce conscious of the day's audience that hung over this Syracusan quarry. She had only felt a great trembling seize upon her, and a wild — an all but ungovernable rage. It seemed as though naught but this senseless, laughing, chattering crowd of men and women stood between her and her Ion. Her one impulse was to press forward, to push, to harm or hurt, if need were, that she might be among those who stood closest to the awful brink.

Her eyes, blinded by the outer blaze of the intense sunlight, enabled her, at first, as she bent downwards, merely to descry the deep, wide chasm. A blueish, gaseous light hung, thin, vaporous, between the upper brighter air, and what lay below, at the bottom of the quarry.

Little by little she saw clearer and yet more clearly. Down the sides of the brown opening there trickled streams of moisture. Below — far below — these rivulets had formed pools. These pools were brown — they were choked with foul matter. Tufts of weeds and sprouting grasses, here and there, had grown their germs into the loose, uneven sides of the quarries. And their brightness, as their leaves caught the light, seemed to mock the grim horrors below.

As the features of that awful hell revealed themselves, Maia reeled. Long since she had ceased to hear Praxinoë's cruel chatter. She heard nothing, saw naught indeed, but what lay or crawled there, below, far below, among the foul pools.

The brown spectres moving there, were surely not alive. They bore little or no semblance to men. One or two of the spectres sat up, lifted a spectral hand — and Maia's terrified cry broke from her.

She saw — she knew — now what those brown skeletons were.

"God - is it possible? Oh God! God!"

Maia's wail of horror startled the gay crowd of lookers-on. Women's faces, below their flower-wreathed heads stared, in amazement, at the new-comer. Some laughed, light, scornful laughter. Others scanned Maia's stricken face, with suspicion. Even Praxinoë eyed her, with a fear-stricken glance. She pushed her full lips towards Maia's ear. "For the love of the gods, keep silent! They'll think you an Athenian — and where will I be?"

Maia summoned a smile. Her pallor she could not control. She leant further away from the grassy brink. "It—it sickens one—at first," she made haste to say, as loud

as she was able. Then she took pains to sweep her bottle of unguent below her nostrils. But a new diversion was being furnished, and Maia and her silly fussiness were forgotten.

The roar of roused but enfeebled lions, wasted to the famishing point, rose up from the pit. A brown mass of naked, tattered starvlings had risen, like an army, from unseen holes and crevices. With shrieks and vells, the mass flung itself upon some scattered bits of food. The fight was the fight of men turned to beasts. The brown mass was kicking, pushing, beating, squirming, snarling, Now a slimy skeleton would emerge, painfully, from the packed mass of humanity above him, his cheeks stuffed. Once free he would be seen running like a deer - to hide his prize. Others, having secured a morsel, hurried off to the inner quarries, bent on sharing it with a less fortunate comrade. Some made no effort to compete with their frenzied comrades. Many were too weak to stand, or even to crawl. And others dared not move lest a strip of a blanket. on which they were sitting, might be lost. For Sicilian nights in autumn were cold; and to possess a night covering was next in bliss to being fed or ransomed.

Maia had strained her eyes to the uttermost. Each wasted shape, every brown, yellow, or grey-blue face had been scanned, searched, and relinquished,—with an inward moan that was half relief, half despair. How could she bear to find in one of those crawling, shrunken, bestial shapes her beloved Ion? Yet how could she live, were he not among these his fellow sufferers? For alive he must be; she knew him, felt him to be living. Of that fact she was as certain as of her own fever-strung anguish. Since ever she had leant over the quarry, Ion's face had seemed ever coming towards her—nearer and yet nearer. She could almost hear his tread, feel his actual presence.

Praxinoë's shrill cry now startled Maia. The women seemed gone fairly mad with delight.

"See — Oh see!" cried Praxinoë, "the big man — he's a wonder!"

The giant, who had appeared, was a favourite. Cries and shouts were sent downwards.

"He's the Scythian of the quarries! Hello! Scythian!
— you've work on hand to-day" the women shouted down, to the huge shape, as it came within the circle of light. With an effort at a grotesque gesture—one it was pitiful to see—the monster, as he emerged into the light, attempted to give the salute comic actors made use of upon the stage. The trick had won him food before. A shower of sesame cakes rewarded him now. The gaunt face smiled. It was the wide grin of a living skull. The lookers-on continued to accost the "Scyth."

"Ha! Ha! Another Athenian gone to hell! Charon will be busy this week—they're dying off rapidly!" All laughed at the brilliant sally. Not a woman's face had blanched; not a smile had paled. Eyes had, indeed, brightened. The Syracusans felt they had not wasted their day. The show had been better, if anything, than usual. For as the giant had come forward, one of the prisoners had fallen, had struggled, for an instant, and now lay dead.

"Dance! Dance!" cried out, imperiously, a delicatevisaged girl. As she leant over the dreadful abyss, she was a vision of frail beauty. Her draperies clung to a shape as delicately modelled as Psyche's. Her amber-tinted hair had escaped her jewel-studded fillet. Its soft curls encircled her slender throat and brow. Her eyes were tender—were melting. Her lips were scarlet with excitement. She was clapping her hand joyously, like a pleased child, as she shouted down her commands. "I'll give you a whole basket, all to yourself. But you must dance for it!" cried the divinity, and she struck the Scythian with a cake.

Maia felt her knees giving away. Could she indeed endure to go on looking? Death-like chills were now shaking her. She felt as though turned to stone. Ah!—were it but a dream—this hell about her! That brilliant, jewel-gleaming, flower-decked circlet of cruel, horrible women! Surely they were no women! They were furies—Hecate's offsprings, clad in costly raiments, with hearts of stone!

That Scythian's dance! Could mortal eyes look upon such a sight — and not cry aloud, in pity?

For the gaunt monster was now dancing. His giant legs were thin as reeds — but the beast within was starving, and the beast willed them to dance. Now his feet met, then they were lifted; next the huge shape was flung quickly about, in a circle, whirling in his mad wild dance. It was surely a scene for devils only.

The amber-draped divinity still smiled her gay smile. She was leaning now as far over the bank as she dared, without endangering her safety. Her gold-fringed fan was beating time to the monster's steps.

"By the Graces, but he remembers his steps. Here—take this!" and the girl tossed the giant a covered basket, thickly packed. She took it from a slave's hand. "He'll live a week on that—and dance all the better for the wine there is in it." The girl's eyes suddenly beamed as she spoke.

"Ah—here's luck! here are the Inseparables,—Damon and Pythias we call them. It is days since I've seen them—have you—or you seen them?" and the girl turned, questioning, her eyes alight, to her neighbours.

Two shapes now emerged from the inner recesses of the

abyss. One—the frailer of the two—apparently—was upheld by his companion; he moved as might walk a jointed skeleton. His great eyes shone with feverish light. The skin that revealed, rather than covered his anatomy, was that of a Persian.

Maia scarcely breathed. The mere sight of the lightish copper skin had made her heart stop. "Yet" she cried to her tortured soul—tormented with the long strain of looking, of watching for a sign, for a familiar gesture, "yet though these walk indeed like men—a little less like beasts—surely they seem quite old—these two—quite—"

The gold and amber-draped girl was sing-songing again, in her languid Sicilian accents:—

"They are never apart — you see. They always walk thus — they keep entirely to themselves. One doesn't alwas see them, either. One of them — the Athenian, not the Persian — was ill for a long time. The other — the dark one — kept him alive — by giving him his slave's rations —"

The two shapes were now in full sunlight. And one of them had turned his eyes and face upwards. For a single instant the hollowed eyes had stared, had flashed a startled glance upward. Then, as though he had seen a vision, only as quickly to have it vanish, he turned to his companion, and spoke to him.

And, under skies that were tropical, Maia had turned to ice, then to lead. Her senses were so benumbed, she had no power even to cry out.

For one of the skeletons was Ion.

# Chapter XXXV

#### ION SINGS

As Ion emerged from the inner recesses of the quarries, he and Persia moved with their now habitual enfeebled steps. Persia had urged their going to the mouth of the quarry, to seek the air. The fever that for weeks had racked his beloved master's frame, had left Ion such a legacy of lanquor as to make his living state match death's inertia.

Ion, weak, and a skeleton, was proving the vigour and staying quality of his unspent, unwasted physical force. In hell though he was, he was slowly, surely, creeping back to life.

Night after night Persia had stripped his own body to cover his dear master's wasted frame; and, since his convalescence, the half slave's rations given each prisoner had been cunningly mixed with Ion's portion. Persia had starved that his master might live. The re-action had come. Persia felt the on-coming of the dread enemy, from which he had saved his master.

"Dear Master — let us seek the opening. I know not what possesses me — but a breath of even that befouled air I must have," he had gasped, as he had stretched forth his emaciated hand to lean upon Ion's arm.

In an instant Ion's skeleton arm was about his dear Persia. Ion's face, drawn, fever-wasted, showed a quick flicker of fear. "Dearest Persia—art suffering? Art faint? Oh lean upon me! Indeed I am strong—fear not. Let me bear you hence. I am stronger than you think." Ion's sudden alarm lent him a supernatural

energy. He half carried, half dragged his slave onward.

As the Scythian had passed, his covered basket gluttonously clutched, Persia had emitted a faint gasp. His eyes
grew wild—

"Master — I believe he carried food. Some one has thrown him a full basket." Even as he whispered his guess, Persia felt himself seized by a strange, an overwhelming force. A new, an unknown Persia had been born — at the mere suspicion of fair food. This new being was a monster of furious, devouring appetite — one gentle Persia could no more control than he might up-bear Ætna's might.

Persia suddenly began to obey this new, this awful monster. It bade him work upon Ion, play upon him, caress him into procuring from the gay furies aloft, what the Scythian had won.

"Master — dear, dear Master — what he has done — might not we do? If there is food to be won? — surely —" and Persia's long fingers were fondling Ion's arm, his immense eyes, rolling in deep hollow sockets, wooed his master with cringing, pleading looks.

Ion gave Persia a glance of amazement. Persia only too obviously was sickening. Ion felt himself summoning all his strength to soothe — to comfort his slave.

"Let us first see what is happening — dear Persia — if any new torture has been invented — by these furies! or if the Charites — merciful sisters — have worked upon their hard hearts."

With his arm now tightened about Persia's limp frame, Ion suddenly emerged, from the gloom of the inner quarries, into full sunlight.

The strong southern sunshine, slanting downward, obliquely, produced its usual effects. Ion's eyes, weakened by want and disease, could not withstand the blaze. For a moment he groped his way, leading Persia. And instinc-

tively he lifted his free hand, to screen his suddenly bedimmed, tear-rimmed orbs.

The familiar, accustomed sights, as he sent his gaze upward, met his vision. The grasses, and out-shooting shrubs, that made a pleasant mockery of greenness between the adorable blues of the Sicilian skies and the reeking filth and odours below, these green sword-blades and the spirals of the sprouting shrubs, were waving lightly, gaily, in midair.

About the quarries' upper edge, he saw the familiar circle gathered. The faces, some young and lovely, others hard and painted, were, if not the very same, of the now well known Syracusan ripe type; parasols and faces were held above the towering head gear; and the intense light shone through the pink, blue, and crimson textures of the parasols, throwing a strange glamour of harmonious tinting on the women's bent faces and bared shoulders.

Ion's ears caught the circling ring of the continuous jeering and insults. The women were clapping, as each and every day they had clapped, at this lengthened comedy of Athens' a-dying.

As Ion's gaze travelled on, from group to group, he almost smiled, in his bitterness: certain faces were become so familiar, among these tormentors, they seemed almost friends. There was the woman with the pearl fillet — she who laughed the loudest of all! — and there, close to the strong-voiced woman, was the delicate-visaged creature, who looked the angel, and who commonly led the more brutal of all the sports. To-day she wore amber jewels and honeytinted draperies.

Ah-ha! — a new face — a strange shape had made its appearance.

Were the heavens, indeed, about to open — to carry him and sickening Persia upward? For God in Heaven! this

woman's face looked kind! It actually shone and glowed with tender, human feeling. It had — O wild delight! this lovely face had in its yearning sweetness something of divine Maia's look. How the mere thought of such resemblance made him pulse! How or where the impulse came, Ion never knew. Almost insensibly, he lifted his voice and sang —

"Mighty Power, all powers above, Great unconquerable love. Thou who liest in dimple sleek On the tender virgin's cheek—"

Ion's song, even as his thoughts travelled thus, suddenly came to an end. His strength, he found, was gone. He had no voice left for the anti-strophe.

A loud clapping rewarded his effort. Shouts of "Evoë — Saboië — Evoë!"

Ion smiled upward his thanks. He saluted, with the best grace he could master. His pleading eyes swept the circle. It was not applause, but food, he was longing to have flung down to him.

A single sesame cake shot downwards. Like one brought to life by miraculous means, Persia had sprung—had jumped, and he caught the sweet morsel ere it fell—he had crunched it in the very teeth of his master. For this monster within was more powerful than love or the sense of servitude.

Persia's eyes glittered more brightly than before, his face had a bestial look as he went close to Ion, to whine with a fierce animal growl—

"Oh-h — can you not finish the ode? With the antistrophe they would surely fling down more cakes!" And then he felt himself swaying. But Ion caught him; he held him close, and to his inflamed eyes, Ion sent loving, soothing looks.

"Dear Persia, I'll even dance for the devils, if 'twill soften their cruelty. I'll try the anti-strophe — but — are they not calling for something else? What is it they wish? There — dear Persia, lie thus, at rest." Spreading his mantle, he placed Persia's wasted shape upon the ground. Then he went forward, lifted his head, and opened his lips.

On and on Ion now sang, his voice gathering amazing strength and fulness, as his notes rang up. With that semblance to Maia above, smiling as Maia might have smiled; — and with the thickening memories swarming within, Ion was, for a brief instant the old young Ion; he was breathing fresh forest scents — he was feeling Maia's fragrant shape linked with his, as they trod the silver world of Arcadia; and, married to his own voice, were Maia's glorious trilling tones. Their chorusing song was swinging up to the moonlit arches.

Even as he sang, out of the happy vision a real joy came. For Maia's pictured self seemed waving — above the opening — a filmy lilac veil. Her imaged likeness had caught the very gesture! Thus had Maia waved, in farewell, from the steps of Aphrodite's sanctuary, as the fleet sailed away. Zeus — and the dear gods, one and all! But how far away seemed that bright Athenian world! And what a mockery for him to be singing, to Syracusan fiends, his and Maia's own dear love song, and for that dear tantalizing angel to practice Maia's very gesture, and to wave, thus, to one in hell!

Ion felt the tremor of a great weakness succeed the instant's uplift. He was forced, and quickly, to steady his enfee' ed limbs.

The divinity was still shining down upon him — this true angel's face was surely blooming from out heaven's blue, to

send him the hope of a fair Nemesis! This lovely being had actually stolen Maia's eyes!— the very stoop of her shoulders was hers—and she wore Maia's own preferred amethystine draperies—Blessed be the Athenian gods she had come! For with her had dawned a new, a radiant-orbed hope. He would sing to the shape, as though she were indeed Maia. Perhaps she, with her kind human eyes, might toss Persia a second sesame cake.

Ion straightened his wasted frame. And he drew in his breath. Even at this supreme moment, his early orchestral training came to yield him succor. Feeble, quavering, the notes he essayed to voice, grew fuller, stronger. Up through the quivering air he sent the whole of Sophocles' incomparable ode. The furies aloft had ceased their loud chattering. And the sick and the dying below held their faint breath — their moans were stilled.

When he stopped, Ion moved backward to place Persia closer to the wall of the opening, and then he once again went forward.

The crowd aloft were now shouting downwards -

"Euripides! Give us something of your Euripides!"

"Give us a chorus!"

"An ode! An ode!"

Euripides was new to the Syracusans. Few, if any, of his great plays had been given in the theatre. Those Sicilians who had heard his masterpieces given at the Festivals or Games, in Hellas, had brought back enthusiastic praise of his genius.

This singing Athenian, below, in that foul prison, looked better born than most of the prisoners. He might be able to give some of the famous Athenian Euripidean choruses—since he knew his Sophocles so well. A passionate lover of theatrical novelties—a tall handsome Syracusan, thought of this possibility, and acted upon it.

"An Euripidean chorus — one of the best — and a full basket shall be sent to you!" he cried out, lustily, to Ion.

Ion felt his very soul rise up in gratitude. And Persia was softly crying, for pure joy.

Once again Ion straightened his tall, emaciated frame. He had begun to chant slowly:—

"O great is the bliss of the great to enjoy," when, suddenly, without due warning, both voice and memory failed him.

Ion's mind was a blank. Not a word, not a line could be wooed to present itself. Ion repeated the first lines, striving thus to court his wayward memory. But his brain was an empty ball.

He stood, palsied, trembling, the sweat of desperation upon him. His plight was pitiful to see.

His audience, meanwhile, had perceived the Athenian's despair, or guessed his ignorance. Syracusan mercy was meted out to him. Jeers, hisses, curses rang in chorus—a hellish sound. Even those within the pit muttered fiendishly. For suffering turns men to devils—and all who had heard the bribe, had counted on fighting for its possession.

Out of this circle of hellish chorusing, Ion's eyes sought the comfort of Maia's counterpart. Were those dear resembling features to soften — to smile —

Why!—the heavens were blue once more! And his mind had begun to work. The adorable being was bending forward. As she smiled, he could actually see the glistening of bright eyes. Weeping—and for him, perhaps! Marvel of marvels! Ion almost laughed, to his leaping pulses. These Syracusan fiends had made him forget women could weep! And now this—Maia's very image was trying to speak—she was sending words—and such words, down into hell. This angel spoke Athenian Greek! Greek!

Resonant, melodious, rhythmic, the familiar accents came. The voice was saying —

"Pray give us the chorus from Iphigenia. It begins, does it not—'Happy They'?"

Ion would have heard the syllables above the roar of crumbling worlds. For the voice matched the face. If one could conceive of heaven-sent miracles, 'twas Maia in the flesh!

The intoxicating thought lent Ion new-born forces. His memory served him now. The lady's pure Ionic accent had made his old self re-live. Athens, the Markets, the Colonnades, the Theatre, the mighty Citadel, crowded thick before his mind. As he sang on and on, he was singing his old joyous days, his victories, his loves, his passionate ache for home, and city, and father and Maia.

The sonorous, cadenced beauty of verse and song, produced their effect. Hell above and hell below were silenced.

The circle of the tormenting furies hung breathless, tranced, about the brink. Tears came to the eyes of many. Even strong men felt the quiver and strain of moved feeling. Those who were in pain, close to Ion, forgot to moan. And the dying smiled. For the fields of Elysium were already reached; as they floated on, to Charon's waiting boat, the gods had sent a singing choir, to make death sweet. Athens lay shining, below the Temples on the Rock, and Pallas Athena, in her armoured glory, was crowning them, as heroes, in suffering.

When Ion came to the end of the chorus, there was a long moment of stillness. It was broken by a man's loud clapping and his shout—

"By Apollo and all the muses!—but the creature has a voice!" cried out, lustily, this newly-come Syracusan. He, in company with a band of fashionably attired youths, had

swept up from the theatre, in time to hear Ion's chanting.

The speaker, with a spring, had placed himself beside the amber-draped beauty. His arm was about her waist, his lips swept her cheek.

"Ah-h — dearest Aphrodite — I knew I should find you here!" the young man cried; his eyes were full of mocking indulgence. "And what new invention have you tried — to make dying harder — you dear monster of iniquity?" The man ran his eyes, with devouring fondness, over the delicate face and shape he had now drawn close to him.

The girl allowed herself to be thus appropriated. Her face remained immovable. She kept her eyes plunged downward, into the gulf below. Presently she murmured, caressingly:—

"Give him to me, Gamelion. Once he is fed and cared for, he'll make a good singer. Give him to me—instead of those pearls. None of the others has as distinguished a look."

The words were languorously enunciated. The man was about to answer when, to the amazement of both, a white face had swept between.

With all her wonted Athenian imperiousness, Maia was standing before the two. Though her face was marble, her voice was firm.

"Nay — but 'tis I must claim him. By rights this Athenian belongs to me. I had long since intended to buy him."

Maia's eyes rained their old look of authoritative command.

"Well of all the bold hussies! A stranger — a Corinthian — setting up claims over our prisoners — over an Athenian! Of all things! Gamelion, tell the guard to lower the

X

basket." The Syracusan had suddenly developed the quick Sicilian temper.

Maia all but closed the girl's lips.

With swift daring she had caught the girl's waist;—she was whispering hoarsely in her ear—the one furthest away from her lover—"Come—I must speak to you—Oh, do not deny me! Make an excuse. I have something of utmost importance to impart to you."

The girl stared, bit her lip, gave Maia's impassioned, beseeching face a comprehensive look, and lazily released herself. "Keep my place, Gamelion, and bid the guard wait—this lady and I have something to say to each other."

And the two swept away, together, beyond the crowd.

Once they had gained an isolated corner, Maia looked down upon the delicate visage with all her soul in her face. She bent over her. She fondled the limp hands, the slender wrists; — never had she sent the thrilling quality into her tones as now.

"Listen—O hear me! You too are a woman, and young. You also have loved—your eyes tell me you are not wholly unfeeling. That poor wretch yonder—was once my lover. I—I loved him. I love him still. I came here to save him. Will you help me? If you will—half of my fortune is yours."

Never had Maia's beauty been as moving. A divine radiance shone from her glistening, pleading eyes. All the power of her soul she was pouring forth, to move this slim creature to responsive quivering.

Her bold move appeared to have missed of its effect.

Aphrodite neither spoke nor stirred. Her soft languid eyes scanned Maia's face as though she were reading a scroll. She seemed chiefly marvelling that the loss or gain of a lover — and such a lover! — should move a woman to

tears. She watched the large, round drops fall, one by one, on Maia's beautiful neck.

Then, suddenly, with amazing quickness, the features melted. She smiled. One could easily divine men's love of this frail, perfectly finished little masterpiece; for her smile had the sweetness and guileless simplicity of a child.

She lifted her chin. And her blue eyes met Maia's.

"Oh-h—if he's been your lover, and you have come a long journey, you must have him, of course. He isn't much to save though, is he? No-o—don't say that. I don't want anything—not money—of all things. I have more of that than I care for."

For a single instant the girl held her breath. Then her child's smile broadened. "Only—if—you will give me these, as a remembrance, I will keep your secret. I will try to help—"

Maia's fingers were already busy, her voice was husky with feeling, as she cried:

"Oh-h — take them, and this, and this! I shall pray for you, I shall bless you always."

She was tearing, as she spoke, at her ear-rings, necklace and bracelet. As they fell from ears, throat, and arms Aphrodite greedily clutched them. Her small hand closed over the coveted treasures, and crying aloud, as she sped onward, she hid her jewels in her girdle —" Come — let us be quick — something new is on. I hear shouting."

The two hurried back to the quarry, hand in hand.

Ion they found still held his audience. But he was not now alone. Others had crawled toward him, on hands and feet. Some lay, too weak to rise. Others, like Ion, stood upright. All were chanting, in concert. And Euripides' chorus was a chorus indeed.

It had come to an end, as Maia and Aphrodite joined the listeners.

### 414 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

A rain of cakes and scraps of food had rewarded the singers. The former sickening scramble was repeated. Maia saw Ion grasp one large morsel, and speed away. He was now bending over Persia. He fed him as he might a sick child.

Aphrodite meanwhile, had been true to her promise. Whatever she had said to her lover had produced its effects. She led the Syracusan toward Maia. "This is the lady—she has a taste for skeletons—it appears. Go with her—show her the guard. Make him lower the basket—I'd like to see how he looks, in full daylight."

Maia smiled her thanks, and followed. They swept to the place where the guards stood.

"If you'll lower the basket — immediately — you'll not lose your time," said the man. And Maia immediately opened her palm.

The foremost guard smiled, shook his head, then seeing the size of the coins, scratched his head meditatively — and pulled out the ropes.

The basket was lowered. Its progress was skillfully handled. As it dropped, it stood close beside Ion.

Ion and Persia stared, looked in each other's eyes, and stood motionless.

A loud laugh rang down from the circle rimming the quarry's upper edge.

Maia found that she had lost her strength. She could neither speak nor talk. Her utmost power had been exhausted. She could only look — and stare and stare downwards.

The guard lost his patience. His shout now filled the spaces of the air and of the abyss.

"You fool! Can't you read luck when it stands beside you?" To further emphasize this meaning he whipped an end of the cord towards Ion.

Ion's face cleared. His eyes were aglow — for now he understood. Among those furies, some one meant to buy him — to make him their slave. The joy seemed too great to bear.

He felt Persia pushing him towards the basket. He heard the envious roar of his less fortunate fellow sufferers. He had actually placed one foot on the edge of the wicker when Persia, he saw, was in tears.

"Kiss me — dear Master — once. I can now die happy — you are saved."

But Ion on the instant had pulled himself away. He had caught Persia to him—he clasped him close. With an arm about him who had indeed saved his life, Ion lifted his head. He shook it, as he cried upwards, with a firm voice:—

"Whoever you may be—O deliverer!—receive the thanks of Ion—of the Piræus—Crates' son. And may our Athenian gods rain down blessings upon you! But this man I can not leave—he is dying because I still live—leave us, that death may release us together—as we have suffered together!"

A shout of derisive laughter — of exquisite rapture roared itself forth. The Syracusians rocked their delight. Here was a situation in a thousand — one new — replete in drama — as amazing as an Aristophanean comedy.

"By Jove!" cried Aphrodite's lover, his brutal laugh drowning the feebler ones about him, "What a fool! Here's one who refuses to be saved — won't leave his slave! There's a typical Athenian for you. Little wonder we beat them — with their prayers and soft speeches. Ha! ha!"

"Who wants a fool and his slave?" laughed a youth, close to Maia.

"Who'll take both — at a bargain? Who bids?"

Maia summoned her composure. She laid her heaviest

jewelled hand on the mocking youth's arm. She knew the power of her eyes — with young men. She made use of this, her woman's secret now. As she spoke, she smiled divinely. She appeared to be taking the youth into her confidence.

"Tell the guard — will you — that I will take them both — as slaves. Once the two are cared for — they may be useful. When I've fattened the Piræan," Maia choked, "I — I think his voice may be excellent — as a singer."

Maia's soft voice, her composed manner, her air of command, above all the purity of her Ionic accent and her remaining jewels, some huge pearls, produced their effect. The youth was flattered, and he obeyed. He gave a quick order, rang down a sharp command to Ion, and the two stepped slowly — with awkward feebleness — into the basket.

"The lady will take them both," he had shouted. "Corinthians for ever! They know a good bargain! Up with them — Up! Up. There — easy — swing them — that's right — give them a good wide swing — 'tis long since they had one!"

The basket, with its human burden, was swung aloft, above the heads of the audience, and with a practised hand.

For a brief instant, it hung in mid-air. The next, with a swing and a plunge downward, it came to its rest beside Maia.

Above the wicker rim a haggard-eyed creature stared about him, with widely distended eyes. Ion's yellowish pallor, his bones protruding through his skin, the sunken cheeks and deeply hollowed eye-sockets brought to the thick circle of the curious crowd rustling about the basket, as from the grave, the gaunt picture of a man snatched from death's grasp. Ion sent his eyes from face to face. At last the mauve draperies were found, and the face was—

Then Ion's head was seen to shoot suddenly backwards, as though struck by an unseen hand.

And a great cry filled the air.

"Maia! Maia!"

But the lips could say no more. The wildly rolling eyes were closed, and the head sank. Ion lay limp as death, in a swoon.

Aphrodite's voice was heard calling from the road:—
"Come — that play is ended! — the other one's all but dead already. It's tiresome! Who'll come down for cooling sherbert with me — at my house?" Half the crowd followed her. Unfeeling Aphrodite had been as good as her word.

When Ion opened his eyes he felt the warm, loving clasp of Maia's hand in his. She was walking beside him. Some slaves were swinging along — gently, with the litter on which he lay, between them. At first Ion was too weak to speak. But he could look and look. He knew for a surety now his heaven was reality.

"Maia — blessed, beautiful Maia!" he breathed. His rapture swallowed up his amazement. He was too weak for a confusion of emotions. His thoughts came simply. His beloved Maia had come out to him — out of the awful hell of his sufferings. She was walking beside him. In the thick shadow of a cypress grove Maia swept him her first kiss.

"Hush-h — don't speak O beloved! Oh my love — my love — to feel you thus — to know you living!"

Maia's full heart could command no further words. But kisses and more kisses were speech enough.

Later, as they moved on and on, she heard him murmur, "Almighty Power, all powers above — Great Unconquerable Love!" and the eyes of both were swimming in tears through joy too deep for words.

## 418 ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

Thus through the pink world of the Syracusan sunset, they crept down the hill slope. The blanched marbles of houses and temples were flushed with colour. The very city seemed to mirror their joy. Far out beyond the reddening city, the blue waters of the Great Harbour had turned to wine. This Sicilian bay wore the deep violets of the Ægean. As the stars flamed, golden balls of brightness, the rythmical beat of oars beat upon the still night.

Maia and Ion, beneath the starry firmament, were being wafted homeward.

## Chapter XXXVI

## AN EPITHALAMIUM

THE autumn grains were showing their green shoots, in Hermione's fields, in Eubœa. Her terraced gardens, that sloped to the winding river, were full of the last roses and lilies that were to bloom, before Spring came.

On a bright morning in Pyanepsion (October) Myrto and Asia had made their accustomed tour, of the garden beds. Myrto had plucked a deep red rose, and then another. She placed them both securely within her girdle.

"Come, the air is brisk, let us go down for a walk by the river. Mother is gone forth with the overseer, to look at the grain, beyond the pasture."

Asia assented. It seemed as good a way as any of passing a dull morning. Yet the air, as Myrto had said, was good. It stirred one's blood, agreeably. And in the whole estate, there were few places as pleasant as the river.

On their way thither, they startled some young pea-hens, whose unnatural mother was gossiping with other hens, more fortunate, with no tiresome broods of vain male creatures to bring up to the point of indifferent abandonment and a promising growth of tail.

A dozen or more fully grown birds, resplendent of plumage, were sunning themseives upon the terrace-wall. As Myrto passed, they spread their iridescent circles above the roses and tall lilies. With a screech, they closed their tails, to fly barnwards, once they saw the backs of their admirers turned upon them.

Down by the river, Myrto and Asia found the usual

pastoral scene already set. Flocks of slow-moving sheep were industriously nibbling at the grasses. The shepherds were carving reeds into rude flutes; one was already playing to his flock. The river, as it ran, warbled also its silken notes. And the two great avenues of plane trees spread wide their dappled shade.

Myrto had brought a frame and some embroidery. She was soon seated upon the crooked arm of a companionable tree branch. Asia was knitting beside her. And the autumn air was very still.

So still it was that the soft drop of a horse's hoofs, from a far distance, sounded close — almost near by.

"Now I wonder who that can be!" fretfully murmured Asia. And she knit her black brows.

"Don't fret, Asia. It can't be Spartans — they come in companies — not singly," laughed Myrto.

"That's right — laugh! laugh! You'll sing a different tune some of these days. No one knows, save the gods, what fate may be ours!" grunted Asia. Her eyes wore an anxious look, and her face showed her age, as she listened. For Asia, a slave, knew more of all there was to fear, in these troublous times, than could either Hermione or Myrto.

"Asia, you've prophesied trouble ever since father died. Wait till Thrasybulous returns. Wait till Serapion —"

Asia's groaning interruption rose up to smite the still air.

"Thrasybulous! Serapion! One dead or a slave, and the other a mere stripling! Fine warriors these—to defend defenseless women. I wish I could see that horseman. There are two, or my ears are dull."

The approaching horsemen were near enough now to arouse Myrto's interest. Instinctively she lifted her hands to her thick braids. Her hair was tucked up in peasant fashion, in the way Electra wore her tresses in Euripides'

play. In the quiet secluded life Myrto and her mother led, and had led for two years, city habits and town fashions were disregarded.

Eager as was her curious wonderment, Myrto yet had calm enough to wish she had taken a veil along.

The horsemen, she conjectured, were possibly visitors, or some of her fathers' friends from Athens might have come, to bring news of Serapion or of Thrasybulous.

"They are coming from the coast," Myrto cried suddenly, starting to her feet. A wave of excitement swept her. It seemed as though an event of importance were about to happen "Perhaps, it may be Thrasybulous! or — or " she paused, she met Asia's contemptuous glance.

"Ion, you should say. But you never do! You are ever thinking of him whom you should not."

Myrto's cry was not in response to Asia's scornful reproach. With a quick bound, frame and thread were sent rolling to the ground. And Myrto was whirling down the road, toward the galloping horsemen. Her "Oh! Oh!" floated backwards to Asia. This wild and joyous exclamation told the latter nothing she longed to know.

The foremost rider, the slave saw, had reined in his horse, on catching sight of Myrto's flying figure.

Asia was about to hasten on, even to attempt the dangerous feat of running, that she might prevent Myrto from further disgraceful behavior, when to her immense relief, Hermione made her appearance. She was hurrying across the road. She was now close to Asia.

Startled, with eyes big with amazed affright, Hermione showed the effects the anxious years had brought. Threads of grey were shining above her troubled brow. And her step was less vigorous than when Critias had lived to make perpetual activity the daily rule of her life. The something spiritual that comes from suffering, had given a subdued

look to Hermione's proud features; the winged fire of eager hope was quenched.

She was now visibly, nervously, startled, as had been her slave, by the appearance of two horsemen. In this remote and solitary country, with the Spartans in possession of the road leading to Athens, across the frontier, these lonely women trembled at every footfall, and saw an enemy in every stranger's face.

"Know you who these gentlemen are? And how comes Myrto, in Heaven's name, to be alone, yonder?"

Myrto cut her mother's words in two. She was running toward her with breathless joy. And the stranger was hurrying close upon her flying feet.

With her arms in high air, Myrto cried, "Oh Mother! Tis Timoleon! He's alive, and he is here — he has come to protect us!"

With a sob of pure joy, Myrto flung herself upon Hermione's shoulder, since decorum precluded the possibility of its being Timoleon's.

Timoleon, handsome, flushed, yet thinner and still wan from his recent illness, was warmly welcomed by Hermione. She herself even choked a rising sob. To see an Athenian face, after these terrible months of eating fear, of loneliness, and of apprehension; — to look upon Timoleon's brilliant, forcible features; to feel his warm grasp, and to know a man was here, at last, to bring comforting strength as well as to give true tidings — all this brought Hermione such fulness of delight, as well as relief, she could gauge by her immediate feeling of security how close she had lived to the edge of fear.

Once within the house, and Hermione and Myrto hung on every word of Timoleon's stirring, tragic tale. After all had been told, of the war news, and of Athens' latest terrible history, Timoleon led his hearers on by gradual stages, to more strictly personal matters. To Hermoine he confessed he had come, he said, urged by friends of her husband's, to implore her return to Athens. Eubœa was no longer deemed safe, as a residence, for any Athenian, much less for unprotected women. Eubœa was on the point of open revolt. Athens' allies, one by one, were throwing off the yoke of Athenian supremacy.

"You fear, indeed, open revolt?" queried Hermione, lifting anxious brows. And she thought of her rich pastures and fair fields.

"I am sorry to say that is the received opinion. Surely some, at least, among your slaves—"

"Oh," wearily admitted Hermione, "we have lost many. Dekelia woos them; freedom and Spartan gold, spoils, plunder are too close at hand. Slaves are but human."

"Then come to Athens, dear lady! Let me help you to settle matters. And come, and as soon as possible. My ship — a ship lies even now at the coast — it will hold all you may wish to bring."

"A ship? You have a ship waiting?" Hermione gasped. Her quick glance met Myrto's. Timoleon, surely, and in spite of his sad tale of disaster and of privation, must have brought back some Sicilian booty, gold in plenty, for the former poverty of Timoleon's resources was known to all.

Timoleon quickly disabused the ladies' minds. The ship had been lent; it had been lying idle, he had it for nothing. That which he could not tell them, was that Maia, before her departure, had seen to this, as to every other detail, connected with her mother's safety and comfort.

Of Thrasybulous, Timoleon could give no tiding whatever; and of Nausicaä Hermione's pride forbade her to speak. For she had gone with Glaucus—had fled with her latest lover to Sparta. Serapion had, Hermione was

told, sent eager, loving greeting. He was well, had never been better; "turning soldier is better than athletics in the gymnasia," he had said.

As for Ion, Timoleon narrated his fate as he knew it. Among the returned survivors, no tidings of him had as yet come. Crates was half crazed; he sat on the docks now, night and day. "And when our battered marines straggle in, without Ion, the poor old man weeps. But he takes them all home, and feasts them, for Ion's sake."

"Poor man!" murmured Hermione, the quick tears falling.

"And now, dear lady, should Ion, alas! not return—and—and Myrto will therefore be free, would you receive me—as your son—as dear Myrto's husband?"

The real question Timoleon had come to ask was asked simply, but at precisely the right moment. He had waited until Hermione had seen the utter futility of hope, of Ion's being saved. Since the great battle, three months had passed; and the very last of those who had escaped had long since returned.

Hermione looked from one glistening, pleading face before her, to the other. Timoleon felt, apparently, very sure of his answer. For his hand enclosed Myrto's palm. And Myrto wore a bride's look.

Hermione smiled. She laid her own hand upon the two close clasped.

"I would willingly give her to you, Timoleon, for she loves you. But 'tis Ion alone can release her. Let us wait another month. If no tidings come — she shall be yours."

A little more than a month later Maia's ship landed at the Piræus. It was late, and the quais were deserted. But, so great was Ion's anxiety to embrace his father, that the landing was hurriedly pushed forward.

Mago, who had been sent upwards, to Munychia Hill, to prepare Crates for the great surprise, returned with chilling news.

Crates had been in Athens, for some days. He had been ill. The doctors were in close attendance. He was in Ion's old house, the one close to the Lyceum. Since the doctors despaired of his life, 'twas there he would await the great Deliverer, he had told his friends.

Ion's face, at this news, showed bright fever spots. Maia was shaken with the fearsome trembling that had scarce left her since the start homeward. With her customary quickness at meeting a fresh difficulty, she decided, late as was the hour, to push on, at once, to Athers. The sooner Ion had felt his father's kiss the better for both.

Maia was to find her decision proven the right one. Almost at the very start Ion's cheeks lost their feverish look; his eyes sparkled with glad youthful delight as, one by one, the dear familiar Athenian sights and sounds were met and heard.

The famous road between the Long Walls, as of old, was thronged.

Athens appeared to have recovered her lost bustle, her old wonted stir and activity. Even now, though the night had fallen, crowds of vendors, of slaves, sailors, metics, and soldiers crowded the gay highroad.

In the city itself, there were the same hopeful signs of vigorous life. The Dipylon Gate was astir with the water carriers, farmer's carts, and dairymen. The lights in the thickly built houses shone out through open doors, to throw shadows and to splash bright patches upon the faces built into the walls. Apollo Aqueius, and the rows of the new, stiffly bearded, benign-featured Hermæ were illumined.

Everywhere, throughout the crooked streets and narrow lanes, the resonant Athenian voices rose up, to make the traveller's ears throb with the sense of the true home rapture.

"Oh — Ion — Ion! does it not seem, indeed, as though the time of our sorrow were past, and that in dear Athens, joy alone is to be our portion?" Maia murmured, voice and eyes full of happy tears.

"When I have seen my father, dearest Maia, the cup of joy will indeed be full," replied Ion. And he leant forward, far into the dimly lighted streets, as though by sending his eyes forth he could shorten the distance.

On turning to enter the street of the Tripods, the flare of many torches, the melodious blending of lyres and flutes and voices, in nuptial songs, and the sight of a chariot, blocking the way, announced a wedding. Maia was instantly all woman. Fluttering with curiosity and excitement, she exclaimed, her voice thrilled with the feminine joy in the mere sight of wedding festivities—

"I believe, on my soul, it's a wedding! Ion, indeed, we must see it pass. Who knows but some we know may be among the guests?"

Mago was quickly bidden to tell the bearers of their litters to seek a discreet corner, that there she might alight.

The street was made suddenly ablaze with the great nuptial torches. The foremost slaves marched in time, to the sound of the flutes and the clashing cymbals.

Slowly, with prancing steps, the horses advanced, drawing behind them the wedding chariot.

Beside her husband, between him and Serapion, sat Myrto. Her hand lay in Timoleon's. Through the flowing folds of her veil, under the softening yellow torch light, her face bloomed with the rosy flush of the dawn.

Timoleon sat, staring fixedly before him. Never had his face more clearly revealed its aristocratic lineage, and upon those chiselled features there rested the look of the man who is conscious of having accomplished his ends. In his groomsman's finery, the torches lit a groom who was every inch a man.

Behind the wedding chariot, Hermione followed. With sagging hands, she held the nuptial torch. Her emotion had overcome her. Bright tears fell, unheeded, for all to see. In Myrto's marriage she was parting with all that made her home life still endurable.

With hands convulsively clasped, Ion and Maia stared, looked, marvelled, gasped, and then, as Hermione passed, their questioning eyes met.

Each was asking the other the great upleaping question. How meet this, the best, the most glorious of welcomes, the solution of so many troublesome problems?

Ion's pallor, his trembling, made Maia quick to think.

"Dearest," she hastened to say. "Let me return. Let my bearers retrace their steps. I will go home — to dear Hermione's house. There I shall await her. To the wedding we cannot — I must not go. And you must go on to your father."

Thus it was settled.

Several shades later, Hermione with breaking heart, sat beside Serapion. He was driving her back to her now desolate home. For on the very morrow he—the last of all she held dear—was to go forth, to the frontier, on garrison duty.

The epithalamium was still ringing in Hermione's ears. The picture Myrto's bridesmaids had made, crowding about the nuptial chamber, and the merry, joyous notes of their melodious song, were wedded to the low intimate quiver of Myrto's voice, as she had kissed her mother, at parting.

What a gift to tender any man, this dear Myrto! How she had stood, the very image of thrilled joy shrouded in modesty, there, as Hermione had left her, her hands crossed upon her bosom, the lamps lighting the young and perfect face, flushed with joyous yet tremulous expectancy! The roses that lay strewn upon the nuptial couch were not as fragrant as was her purity. Would Timoleon be kind? Would he learn from Myrto what marriage might mean?

Hermione's thoughts and yearnings crowded thick as, on and on Serapion drove, with a youth's joy in conducting a fine chariot.

As the mother and son neared the house, in the street of Hermes, both stared, exclaimed, as their eyes met, in startled amazement.

Before they came to a rest at the home door, a great blaze they saw, filled the crooked street. Every sculptured face carved into the walls, and the winding procession of the Zeus Herkios and Hermæ were made as plain as in day. Within Hermione's porch a tall figure stood, as though waiting. The shape that loomed forth into the night, was gloriously lighted.

Could it be Thrasybulous, saved, returned? Hermione's heart gave a wild throb of hope.

It was not Thrasybulous but Maia's face that shone forth. From between the high-held torches, her face bloomed out of the brightness like that of a beneficent goddess enshrined.

Mago and Persia had been unable to keep from proclaiming their mistress's claim to kinship with as famous a house. And the slaves, one and all, had flocked about Maia. She could not be pursuaded to await the portentous moment away from the vestibule door. There she stood and had stood; and her slaves, those who knew her, loving her most for such knowledge, and those also, who knew her not, yet glorying in the sense of being owned by one possessing such beauty, and great riches, and as marvellous a history, all

were clustered close about her. The night being dark, they had brought torches, that Hermione might see from afar this famous Maia.

As the nuptial chariot came to a stop, Serapion's joyous, startled greeting rang out. "Why! 'tis Maia!" And would have rushed to embrace his friend and protectress, but Maia waved him aside.

For a single instant of trembling, Maia stood thus, above the level of the street, uplifted, enthroned. Then, with a rush and a cry that rent the air, she had flung herself downwards. She had caught Hermione to her.

"Indeed — yes! I am Maia. Lost Maia! Oh Mother! take me to your heart!"

Hermione held her at first away. She was conscious only of the benumbing surprise of finding this beautiful stranger—she who was surely the dancer who had posed and sung at Myrto's betrothal banquet—here on her doorstep. Then, taking the moved face between her hands, Hermione searched it as though it was a scroll.

A cry rang up that pierced the air. For Hermione knew her daughter. And the two women clung together, and wept as they clung.

THE END.

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